A SYNTHETIC VIEW OF VEDANTA

BY

P. N. SRINIVASACHARI

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PREFACE

ENCOURAGED by the favourable reception of the first edition by the public, the author has ventured on the publication of the second edition in the hope that it will also receive their due recognition. The first three chapters and the last chapter are retained on account of their popularity. The rest of the book has been completely revised and enlarged in the light of subsequent knowledge gained by contacting eminent Vedāntins like S'rīmān Mahāmahopādhyāya Kapisthalam Des'ikācār Swāmi and receiving their blessings. The method is more strictly adhered to in this edition by the addition of relevant chapters bearing on synthetic philosophy, synthetic religion and synthetic philosophy of religion whose central aim is the study of essential problems by stressing the common points of different systems and sects without sacrificing their individuality. In the chapter on "The Comparative Study of Vedānta," the distinction is drawn between Pure Advaita as a deduction from *advaitic* experience and Practical Advaita as the inductive ascent of the *mumukṣu* to the Absolute and also between Pure Vis'iṣṭādvaita and the religion of S'rī Vaiṣṇavism with a view to bringing out the points of contact between Advaita and Vis'iṣṭādvaita which have not been on speaking terms for a long time. This comparative method alone paves the way for the discernment of the common features between absolutism and theism in spite of their differences. The method adopted in this study is called the

immanent method of criticism or the synoptic method as opposed to that of *siddhānta* and it is inspired by the Vedic or Hindu view of life enshrined in the Veda '*Sat* is one, seers call It differently' and the *Gītā* 'Whoso seeks me in any form, in that form I reveal myself to him.'

I am deeply grateful to the Adyar Library, especially to Captain G. Srinivasa Murti, the Director of the Adyar Library, for their kind publication of this work as of previous works. It is needless to refer to the neat printing and execution for which the press is so famous. My grateful thanks are due to Swami Paramatmananda for his valuable suggestions. I am also thankful to my nephew, R. C. Srinivasa Raghavan, who carefully revised the proofs and thus became indispensable in the publication of all my works.

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P. N. SRINIVASACHARI

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE studies contained in this book are largely a collection of articles written for the *Vedanta Kesari* at different times. They are now dedicated in grateful memory to the spiritual comrades of my boyhood (1895-1904) who shaped my thoughts and ideals and have left an indelible impression on my mind. That period witnessed a tidal wave of spiritual fervour in Madras and bliss was it to be alive in those days. It was the time when the message of Swami Vivekananda had a triumphant progress both in the East and in the West and awakened the Vedāntic consciousness in the mind of the

modern educated Indian. A band of brilliant young men in Mylapore came under the inspiring influence of the Swami and this spiritual contact revolutionized their outlook on life. Mr. Kandoji Rao, brother of Dr. M. C. Nanjunda Rao, gave up his studies in order to specialize in Vedāntic life. With him I had the experience of a unique spiritual friendship. Mr. P. Singaravelu Mudaliar, affectionately called 'Kidi' by the Swami, a bright student and professor of the Madras Christian College, renounced every other interest in life and lived the life of the spirit in an *ās'rama* in Mylapore with the moral fervour of a *mahātmā*. Mr. B. R. Rajam Iyer, the talented editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, was a philosopher endowed with the genius of a poet. The Swami used to say that he was one of the most intelligent men he had ever met in his travels. Some years ago, Mr. A. S. Kasturi Ranga Ayyar and myself collected a number of his articles on religious subjects and published them in book form with the title, *Rambles in Vedānta*. Mr. T. G. Pillai was the Sankhyan philosopher of this group of seekers after God and was admired for his stoic serenity. Dr. Nanjunda Rao was the most influential and the most enthusiastic of the Swami's admirers in Madras. These ardent men became the disciples of Santananda Saraswathi, who lived in one of the narrow lanes near Kothavalchavadi. He was the very embodiment of *s'ānti* and sweet reasonableness. It is tragic that many of these gifted Vedāntins passed away in the prime of life before they could communicate their spirituality to others and serve as examples to them.

If Vedānta is to be the universal religion of humanity, it has to stress the importance of the synthetic method as opposed to that of mere *siddhānta*. The synthetic view adopted in this work is largely influenced by the life and

teachings of Ramakrishna to whom *jñāna* and *bhakti* formed a single *sādhana*. Special stress is laid even to the extent of repetition on the presentation of Vedānta in its varied aspects and it is my conviction that it can have universal appeal only by a study of the common points of agreement among the different schools without sacrificing what is characteristic of each of them.

I am deeply indebted to my friend, Sri M. R. Rajagopala Iyengar, M.A., L.T., Professor of English in the Annamalai University, for dealing with the proofs and offering valuable suggestions. I should also express my gratitude to Sri K. R. Sarma for going through the manuscripts and correcting the proofs.

To the publishers I should offer my sincere thanks for their prompt execution.

P. N. S.

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CHAPTER I

THE SOUL OF INDIA

THE soul of a nation is its inner life and genius expressing itself in its manifold activities and imparting its peculiar meaning to them. Each nation develops a *svadharma* along the lines of its individuality and contributes its share to the soul of the universe, like a facet in a precious stone. India is the symbol of soul-power and *śānti* (spiritual serenity). She stands for spiritual unity and synthetic vision. Brute force works by terrorism and cowardice and breeds bitterness; but India knows the art of transmuting such force into a beneficent and redemptive activity. The heart of India lies in her capacity for harmonizing differences, in assimilating alien cultures and absorbing whatever is true and good in them. India is as free and fresh today as she was in the dawn of her civilization. She has suffered from infinite hazards and hardships and still her staying and sustaining power is amazing; she stands deathless and soars to the heavens with her Himalayan serenity and vivifies the world with her Gangetic goodness and love.

It is the innate aspiration of India to realize the unity of things. The bewildering variety presented by modern India in all aspects of life sometimes fills the best of her sons with doubt and despair. But the infinity of the details

and the differences that divide men are the very arguments that suggest their underlying unity. Other countries are interested in standardizing life and establishing uniformity. But such a course is neither possible nor practicable in India. She has a magical power of her own by which she converts mechanism into spirituality. The soul of India is eternal. India feels, wills and thinks, and is really spiritual. This truth is enshrined respectively in her science, art, ethics, philosophy and religion and is illustrated in the lives of her heroes. If the stability of a civilization is to be tested by its inherent capacity to produce poets and philosophers and sages and saints from all ranks of society, then India is the only *puṇya bhūmi* (holy land) that satisfies this condition, and it maintains the dignity of perpetual youth and motherhood like Lakṣmi. That she is stagnant and sterile in the present age is a false notion, and this is dispelled by the mere mention of the names of her modern sons like J.C. Bose, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh and Sri Ramakrishna. The spirit of her synthetic vision is incarnate in their respective messages of the five noble principles, *viz.*, the unity of life, beauty, love, truth and religion. We may state their messages more or less in their own inimitable words.

Sir Jagadish has brought out the ultimate unity of all scientific endeavour. Science seeks the one in the many and sees the same truth in physics, physiology and psychology. There is the same march of law in the living and the non-living. There is really no barrier or boundary line between the realms of life and matter. Metals, plants and animals give the same answers to the same questions. Their responses and reactions are similar and they exhibit the same phenomena of fatigue and exaltation under stimulants. Drugs

and other irritants depress or facilitate their growth. In these mute companions of man, there is the same tremulousness and death spasm ; like the thrills of life, there is such a thing as the throb of things. Nature is as much awake in the lowest things as she is in the highest thought. The difference is only in the degree of evolution. Inorganic matter is not really inert or indifferent to the demands of life. It has the potency and promise of inner growth. It responds to external stimulus like living germs and is irritable like them. Metals, for example, may be killed by means of poison. Likewise, though apparently passive, the plant responds to stimulus like the animal. The stimulus may come from contact, gravity, temperature or light. But in all cases the plant is sensitive to shocks and stimulation. Alcohol increases excitability for a while, and chloroform kills the plant. The plant has the power of movement and a beating tissue resembling the heart. The flow of the sap is its circulation of blood, and it can be depressed or stimulated by reagents. The plant is provided with a nervous tissue, and there are sensory and motor impulses to and from the executive centre. In this way it perceives changes in the environment and executes movements in response to them. The dying plant exhibits signs of death. Thus we see the essential monadic unity in the responsivity of the living and the non-living. Their inner life, growth and death are governed by the same laws. In the sap, the sensations and the self there is the same surging of life and the seeking after the One. The tremour of plant life is not merely transmitted, but gets transformed into the soul of man. Life incarnates in the metal and becomes immortal in man. Thus India with her peculiar spiritual habit sees truth face to face and witnesses the victory of co-operation over competition.

The poetic spirit of modern India finds its fullest expression in the life and message of Rabindranath Tagore. The poet does not infer truth, but has a direct intuition of the wholeness and harmony of things. He has the "vision and faculty divine", by which he reaches the soul of goodness in things evil. Art releases us from the routine of life and reveals the inner joy of creation. Western thought reduces man to a machine and dissects spiritual unity to mere physical units. It is no profit to triumph over external nature and be tyrannised by the passions that rage from within. Mechanism and mammon-worship only end in compartmental views and cut-throat competition. Culture is opposed to Krupp guns and atomic bombs. The world is not a dead machine, but a living whole. But all this does not mean that India should return to the past or take to other-worldliness. A slavish clinging to the past is as fatal to growth as is the spirit of modernizing. Free nationalism should be expansive and not exclusive. Indian culture was born in the forest and is expansive; but western culture was born in the city and is therefore exclusive. Nature is not hostile or alien to the aspirations of man. Separating man and nature is like dividing the bud and the blossom. The poet seizes the beauty that is in nature, internal and external, and loses himself in the rapture of communion. The same spirit shines in the stars above and the soul within. God is not a Being who is beyond the universe, but is immanent in it as the life of its life. The infinite is realized in the finite. The world is a witness to His living presence. It vibrates with the joy of sharing in the Eternal and becoming one with It. The world song cannot be separated from the Eternal Singer. Other-worldliness is as harmful to spiritual growth as sense-enjoyment. The body is not

to be starved and slain as it is really a temple of God. The flower that comes from the dust is offered to the Deity. Life is to be spiritualized and dedicated to love and service. To the seer, death belongs to life as much as birth. The child cries out when the mother takes it away from the right breast, but the next moment it has its consolation in the left. Death is but a renewal of life. Sorrow and suffering have a purifying effect on the soul. True blessedness consists in shifting the centre from the self to God and being lost in the bliss of divine communion.

Mahatma Gandhi is the embodiment of the moral purity and power of modern India. He is a *tapasvin* who has an immortal faith in self-purification and love and a *karma yogin* who seeks salvation through incessant toil in the service of humanity. To him politics and economics without a religious motive are like a death-trap that kills the soul. The meaning of moral genius is summed up in the word *t-a-p-a-s-v-i-n*, which may be regarded as the central truth of social morality. Truth is no expediency; it has intrinsic and absolute value. *Ahimsā* is self-suffering even unto death and consists in the conquest of tyranny by love. In the process of self-purification the control of the *palate* and the *passions* of life is indispensable. *Abhaya* or fearlessness arises from the sense of identifying oneself with the eternal Self that is the rock of ages and courting even imprisonment and death in the pursuit of truth. Svadhesism is the practice of *svadharma* in the economic sphere. There is a vital relation between the supreme good and the economic goods Economics that hurts morality is unmoral and sinful. Mills should not grow like mushrooms and the workshop should bring out the inner worth of every worker. Vernacularization does justice to the unity of Indian thought and language.

Language as a system of meanings is a means of establishing social unity, but the mother tongue does justice to the psychological needs of self-expression. Indianization brings out the essential culture that belongs to India as its *svadharma*. Non-thieving is the practice of simplicity and contentment. But the use of private property for the public good is an essential economic virtue.

Ahimsā is the key to conduct and universal harmony and sums up the moral code of the moralist. Violence is the law of the brute. It starts with blind fury and ends in retaliation. Evil is sterile and self-destructive. It maintains itself by the implication of the good that it contains. Evil is never overcome through evil; it ceases only through goodness. Self-purification comes through suffering woes and forgetting wrongs. It is by self-suffering that we wean the wicked man from his career of crime and thus release the forces of peace and good-will. Non-violence is no passive acquiescence or harmlessness, but is a positive resistance of evil, in which the whole soul ranges itself against wickedness. The *Gītā* is the gospel of the fight between good and evil and symbolises the duel that goes on in our hearts. But in resisting the evil we do not hate the evil-doer. By doing good to him, we redeem him and efface the evil itself. Non-violence is solid but silent self-sacrifice, and is no bluff or bluster. It is thus the basic truth of Hinduism. It is reliance on God who is the rock of ages, with a humble and contrite heart, and it insists on the absolute absence of ill-will against all that lives, including the sub-human species. The cow is a poem of pity, and by protecting the cow we protect the whole dumb creation of God, of which it is the symbol. The Mahatma justifies the principle of *varṇās'rama* as a social order based on self-restraint, division of duties and inner worth, but is

entirely opposed to its modern practice rooted in birth, prestige and privilege, and he proclaims the all-inclusive character of Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda, the apostle of modern Hindu thought, accepts the challenge of the west, establishes the universality of the Vedānta and invites the world to share in its innate hospitality. The *Vedas* embody the eternal truths of spiritual life and the practice of *svadharma* and form the fountain from which the founders of religions draw their inspiration. The sacred books of the world are but pages in the reading of the Infinite, and God's book is not yet finished. The theme of the Vedānta is the discovery of the One without a second, which exists by Itself and explains all things. It recognizes the play of the Infinite in the finite and insists on the solidarity of human life. The Infinite is not in the muscle or the machine, but is the eternal *Ātman* by knowing which everything else is known. Religion is not in dogma or doctrines, but in the realization of the *Ātman.* The Vedānta begins with the external and the personal and ends with the internal and the universal. It is a progress from truth to higher truth, till the highest is realized. The Vedānta teaches the infinity and divinity of man. Men are not weaklings born in sin and suffering, but are the children of immortal bliss. The oneness of the *Ātman* is the eternal sanction of morality and provides for true brotherhood and love. The *yogas* are independent means to *mukti* though their starting points may vary. The theory of *iṣṭam* affords the fullest and freest scope for the choice of one's religion. The idea of renunciation is the very basis of Vedāntic experience. The west tries to solve the problem of 'on how much a man can live', but the east 'on how little a man can live'. India really lives in the cottages and the

Daridranārāyaṇas. Don't-touchism must go and the down-trodden masses should be rescued from poverty and illiteracy and become alive to their Vedāntic strength. India should preserve the Hindu soul with the Kṣatriya body, and spirituality and service go together. The central truth of Hinduism is the ancient teaching that what exists is one, though the sages call it variously. It comes down through the ages and tingles in our blood. Philosophies are not contradictory but only complementary, and Dvaita is as much a part and parcel of the Vedānta as Advaita. Sects may multiply, but sectarianism should go. Hinduism as an all-comprehensive religion based on rationality and synthetic insight accepts and absorbs whatever is good in other religions and has the highest claim to universality.

Aurobindo Ghosh is called the philosopher of the super-mind. According to him the Absolute is being and becoming, the one and the many and yet is beyond both. It is all-inclusive and integral. Creation is the spontaneous self-expression of the Absolute and it descends into the spirit-life and matter. What descends can also ascend and return to itself. Matter becomes spiritualized and spirit becomes divinized until it enters into the supra-mental plane. This is achieved by the exercise of the four *yogas* which are inter-dependent and the effort is fulfilled by divine grace. Then salvation is not only individual but also universal and the whole cosmos becomes unified. There will be a new earth and new heaven and the soul of India will be the cosmic whole. There is no evil, physical or moral, in that state and all values are trans-valued.

The religious spirit of modern India becomes fully alive in Sri Ramakrishna. His life affords the most inspiring illustration in modern times of the manifold ways in which

the mystic experiences God. He summed up in his life the strivings of every sect and religion, and discovered, by his synthetic intuitions, their underlying harmony. He was like a honey bee, gathering and drinking the divine nectar that is concealed in the creeds of the world. Religion is one, but religions are the varied expressions of the same truth. Like the radii of a circle, all religions radiate from and converge to the same spiritual centre. Religion is the science of specializing in God. Sri Ramakrishna had an irrepressible craving for God in all His manifold forms, and his varied *sādhanās* reveal the intensity and extensity of his spiritual yearning. His whole being hungered for God, and those who are mystically inclined can alone have a glimpse of his spiritual restlessness and agony. When a spiritual storm raged over his body, even the senses would swoon away and stop functioning. To abolish the idea of sex he actually worshipped all women as the manifestations of the Divine Mother. His body would recoil from contact with sense values as naturally as it would respond to the divine call. To get rid of the idea of status he would wash unclean places, like a scavenger. For days together he would sit like a statue absorbed in *samādhi*. As the result of his unique *sādhanās* he was blessed with a variety of divine visions including Islamic and Christian experiences. To Sri Ramakrishna, God is both personal and impersonal, and the founder of every religion is an incarnation of the same universal spirit. Religion is not in the realm of rituals and books, but is a direct experience of God. The four *yogas* are different roads to the same goal; but the starting points may vary. The *jñāni* has an intellectual bent, but the *bhakta* is drawn by love; the *karma yogin* has an active temperament, and the *yogi* is for self-control and *samādhi*; but the

goal of all is the same, namely, God-realization. There is no need for criticism, conversion and coercion. The Allah of Islam and the Father in Heaven of Christianity are the same as Brahman, pragmatically.

The abiding faith of India in synthetic unity is thus realized in the deeper life of her great heroes. A Bose sees the whole universe pulsating with the life of God. The art genius of India discovers the underlying harmony and wholeness of things. Her moral spirit incarnates in a Gandhi and restates her gospel of enthroning love in the heart of all beings. Her *svāmis* proclaim to the ends of the world her message of God in all faiths and philosophies. But it is in her sages and saints that the spirit of India finds its highest fulfilment. Thus we see that synthesis and *s'ānti* are the soul of India. The Indian inherits the idea of the ultimate and 'the universal that is behind the particulars'. The flowers of different cultures and creeds are woven into a garland and worn by the Mother. The details furnished by the varied experiences of humanity through the ages form the food of the synthetic mind. The Indian mind is cultural and not credal. Appreciation is the flower of true culture and it is neither insular nor exclusive, but expansive and international. Indian genius is not confined to the country, but it really belongs to the world. The best Indians are the most impersonal and yet they do not sacrifice their individuality. India has faith not in conquest and conversion, but in peaceful invasion into the domain of alien cultures and absorbing them by her aggressive love. Her Asokas, Akbars and Sivajis were interested more in cultural appreciation than in mere militant annexation, and their faith was rooted in spiritual unity and not in uniformity. India is today the battle-ground of the creeds, the cultures and the communal feelings of the world

and India alone has the power to harmonize these differences. She alone of all the nations has the tradition and opportunity of realizing the ideals of the solidarity of man and the fraternity of faiths. Spirituality and renunciation or *jñāna* and *vairāgya* are the twin truths embodying the soul of India, and the nature and value of the second truth will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

MUMUKṢUTVA OR THE DESIRE FOR SALVATION

REFLECTION on the true worth of life leads us to the conclusion that it is a tragic waste 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable', wrought with sadness and the agony of despair. The mind that, with frantic eagerness, runs after the pleasures stored up in the senses, only drinks deeply of the cup of sweet poison and, reeling with giddiness, drops down in gloom. As S'aṅkara says, the moth, the deer, the elephant, the fish and the bee come to grief in gratifying each a single sense; but man drawn irresistibly by the cumulative charm of the five senses, finds only a gaping void and groans under disappointment. Life is ultimately rooted in struggle and cut-throat competition. The so-called music of the spheres is only a poetic rendering of the endless strife in the heavens. Nature is dressed in dread and death, and her beauty and joy are only a figment of the imagination. 'Life everywhere lives on death' and its fair show only conceals the slaughter-house or mutual murder. The world is a veritable *Rudrabhūmi* where the god of death decked with skulls feasts for ever on flesh and blood. Our civilization itself, as James says, is based on shambles and skulls. Behind the feast of life there is the vision of the sepulchre. The spectre of waste and death gnaws at the very root of being and fills it with curdling gloom. Like a

mushroom, youth fades away, wealth vanishes in a moment, and power and fame tickle us for a second. The colour and the glow of life are only a dream and a delusion ; it is really an all-enveloping chillness. One loses all appetite for life. The mind is choked with unutterable grief. The oppressing horror of death freezes the very springs of life and paralyses the soul. Is not life then a piteous tale of woe, melancholy, anguish and despair ?

The hideousness of the inner life is more appalling. Wickedness and sin gush out of our being in torrential profusion. Goodness is only an outer covering veiling inner corruption and rottenness. The so-called poetic justice of a belief in a moral order representing the triumph of virtue over vice is an ethical dream. The tragic waste of life where evil annihilates itself and the good that combats with it, naturally brings on a mood of scepticism and callousness. Besides besetting sin and overpowering evil, there is the pain of ignorance which envelops life in dreary darkness. Philosophy with its irrepressible thirst for knowledge only knocks in vain. "Veil after veil will lift—but there must be veil upon veil behind." Thus thought is oppressed by doubt and results in despair. In spite of all this gloom and despair man seeks the joys of life like the traveller in the wilderness encompassed by fear and death, and like the frog fondly seizing flies, itself being slowly devoured by the snake.

We are therefore forced to cry out in agony that life, pleasure, virtue and wisdom are only a delusion and a mirage that goad us on with false hope and lead to sorrow and death. Man's life is morbidity simulating reason and virtue, but is really "such stuff as dreams are made of." Every pleasure is wrought with pain ; death lurks behind life and a painful mystery encompasses it. Sick-mindedness is the only

justifiable attitude of life. What is more tragic is the loss of the soul in the routine of life which under the sway of habit transforms thought into a machine and makes the prison-house a palace of pleasures. Men of a higher type make desperate attempts to escape the sickly pessimism that inevitably results from reflection.

The active man avoids the torment of thought by losing himself in work and service. Some take refuge in art as an escape from reality and delight in fancy and fiction. An epicurean spurning higher happiness as a mere chimera realizes the *summum bonum* in verse, wine and voluptuous abandon. The rejection of such actual pleasures in favour of a possible future heaven which may not be realized at all, lands one only in a veritable *Tṛs'aṅkuloka*, where the pain of suspense is heightened by regret and disappointment. One would fain go back to the pleasures of the pig; but as the 'clod' is disturbed, it is impossible to commit rational suicide and dwell in animal satisfaction. Immersed in a cycle of births and deaths, tormented by the pairs of opposites and bewildered by the mystery of life, humanity, pale, weary and dejected, looks up in inexpressible agony and utter helplessness.

It is in such moments that man, tired of life, of art, science and philosophy, turns to religion for solace and salvation. At first he runs headlong in his pursuit after pleasure; but, receiving severe blows from nature, he turns away in disappointment and disgust. This is the first stage of *mumukṣutva*, a species of sour-grape *sannyāsa*. Pessimism is only the reverse of optimism. As Swami Vivekananda says, " When nature gives us a gingerbread we laugh, and when at the next moment it gives us a kick we begin to weep." When this disgust is thus justified by thought and deepens into world-weariness, it develops into

the second stage which is essentially an attitude of sick-mindedness. A higher stage is reached when the outer life is a drift and the inner life a void emptied of all value. The sick-minded type with its life-weariness is therefore a negative state without any pronounced longing for release and redemption. The idea of *mumukṣutva* is generated by a positive desire for freedom from the round of births and deaths, each causing the other and both implicating the ego in endless misery. Freedom implies not only freedom from bondage, but freedom in the direction of eternal life. In the final state of *mumukṣutva* release presupposes a positive over-belief in a 'not-ourselves that makes for righteousness,' 'a More that communes with us,' a higher Self that ensouls all beings. The centre gradually shifts from the little noisy 'I' to the Over-Soul that ensouls it. The trend of life is now from self-assertion to self-effacement in God.

Religious life thus becomes identified with the love of God. The truth now dawns on the *mumukṣu* that separation and finitude are at the root of all sorrow. It takes the form of a feeling of incompleteness heightened by the consciousness of sin and ignorance driving irresistibly towards a vague but none the less attainable end. It is a period of stress and storm, an intense struggle of our being to give birth to a new life-form, a new feeling of love to God. Love seeks what it has not and therefore requires to be filled. It delights in self-forgetfulness and comes to fruition and fulfilment in the unconditional surrender to God. The thirst for life is now transfigured into a spiritual yearning for life in God. The 'I' is swallowed up in the 'Thou'. There is a complete abandonment of self-responsibility. The devotee forsaking all earthly things pours out his love in the following experiences: "Not I, but Thou, Oh Lord. Thy will be done. Do

with me as Thou likest. I have nothing. I can do nothing and I am nothing." Very often it takes the form of remorse, humility and resignation. Love no doubt comes to fruition in joy; but even sorrow is a 'redemptive impulse clinging to the object and finally restoring joy'. By means of a new alchemy, suffering is itself transfigured into joy. Love is a joy that separates the devotee from God with a view to a deeper union and joy. In this exalted state personality is entirely changed. The man is born anew and is sustained by divine love. There is a cessation of all worry and weariness. In this feeling of other-worldliness there is an influx of a larger life, an uprush of divinity from the very centre of being, an inundation of flowing love which fills the soul with immortal ecstasy.

Recognizing the value of love in religion, ethical religion has constructed a system of disciplines and values starting with *karma yoga* and culminating in *bhakti* (devotion to God) and *prapatti* (self-gift to Him). *Karma yoga* is a moral training by way of non-attachment to the fruits of action based on the knowledge of the self as different from the body, and as unchanging and eternal. Meditation on the self results in the realization of the individual soul in a state of bliss known as *kaivalya*. But the discriminating *mumukṣu* rejects *kaivalya* as a godless state and realizing that he is only a mode of the Supreme Lord who is the life and soul of everything, animate and inanimate, develops an attitude of *bhakti*. At this stage the centre of reference and love shifts from the individual soul to the cosmic Self enshrined in the hearts of all beings, and the meditative repose that comes out of mere *jñāna yoga* is transformed into a loving devotion to God. *Bhakti* is the love which is "as intense and unremitting as the love which the

non-discriminating have for the fleeting objects of the senses." At first a vague desire and effort, it gradually swells in volume and finally becomes a restless longing for God. The heavily laden soul renounces all, surrenders itself by way of *prapatti* and seeks refuge at the feet of the Saviour. The devotee, unable to bear separation from God any longer, pines away in grief like a bride feeling the absence of her lord. The Lord of Love seeks the *jñāni* as His self. The powerful feeling of *kāma* lying buried in the depths of our being specially lends itself to the expression of divine love or *Bhagavatkāma*. When it is directed Godward as in the love of the Gopīs and the Āzhvārs, it becomes an infinite spiritual longing for the Infinite. At last the joy of divine communion pulsates through the devotee and he revels in that rapturous communion.

The exuberant joy that results from mere emotional demonstration of pseudo-*bhakti* is generally followed by dejection and depression, which leave the system in a state of exhaustion. Elation and exhaustion are the obverse and the reverse of the same emotional excess. The Advaitin, therefore, rejects this form of devotion as an externally determined emotional affair. Higher than the worship of God as an external Designer is the meditation on Brahman as the inner Self of all beings. S'aṅkara defines *bhakti* as the contemplation of our own real Self in a sustained, passionless state of peace. He elaborates a theory of *mumukṣutva* from the stand-point of *jñāna*. Recognizing the truth that the miseries of *samsāra* are due to *rāga* (attachment) and *dveṣa* (aversion) which inhere in every sense-experience, he traces them to *abhimāna* which consists in the false identification of the *ātman* with the body. *Abhimāna* is the result of *aviveka* which again comes out of *avidyā*. Consequently *avidyā* or ignorance of the nature of the *ātman* lies at the

root of all misery. Action done without attachment to its fruits leads to a purification of the mind resulting in the worship of the personal God. Then arises the desire for the realisation of *nirguṇa* Brahman in this very life. S'aṅkara's scheme of *sādhanacatuṣṭaya* (four-fold means) is designed to give birth to this desire. The self is to be heard, pondered over and meditated upon. The first requisite is *viveka* by means of which the self is discriminated from the non-self. The *ātman* whose nature is *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* is beyond the three *s'arīras*, the five *kos'as*, the three *avasthas* and the three *guṇas*. The aspirant thus eliminates the non-self born of *avidyā* and *adhyāsa* by a process of *neti*, *neti* (it is not this, it is not this). It is a process of affirmation by negation. But mere intellectual analysis is only the beginning of religion. The thought of God is not God. The dynamic force comes more from the feeling of renunciation than from thought. Hence the second condition is *vairāgya* which consists in the renunciation and rejection of all the pleasures of this world and of *Svarga*. This is followed by a discipline of the will beginning with *s'ama*. *S'ama* is the restraint of the external activity of the body and *dama*, of the internal activity. *Titīkṣa* is indifference to the pairs of opposites like heat and cold. *Uparati* consists in not thinking of sense objects. *S'raddha* is an abiding faith in the *guru* and the *S'āstras* based on conviction and verifiability by experience. *Samādhi* is the incessant practice of peace based on the sacred texts pointing out the identity of the *jīva* and *Īs'vara*. *Mumukṣutva*, the fourth condition of release, may be regarded as the fruition of the first three functioning together. It is the cumulative effect of the joint action of discrimination (*viveka*), dissociation (*vairāgya*) and discipline (*s'ama* series). Then comes the irrepressible yearning for the bliss of liberation

from the thraldom of *māyā*. The false self melts away in the limitless, spaceless effulgence of *cidākās'a* which lights the sun, the moon and the stars, and the individual is swallowed up in eternal, ineffable bliss. Then Brahman alone is and *māyā* is naught.

Advaita thus explains *mumukṣutva* as a progressive realization of the intense feeling for release generated by *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna*. When the mind is purified by *karma*, exalted by *bhakti* and directed towards the One without a second by the three methods of discrimination, dissociation and discipline, its natural dualistic longing is transfigured into longing for the realization by experience of the identity of the 'I' and the 'Thou'. But Rāmānuja's scheme emphasising the dualistic, devotional temper changes the order giving the highest place in *mumukṣutva* to *bhakti* and *prapatti*. As pseudo-*jñāna* leads to the self-sufficient joy of soul-cognition or *kaivalya* and not of self-identity, pseudo-*bhakti* has to be elevated from mere emotionalism into the self-surrendering devotion which comes out of a living belief in a supra-personal God who enters into and ensouls the individual ego. It is in the inner recesses of *parama bhakti* that we realize the highest bliss of divinity. *Bhakti* and *jñāna* are essentially different modes of approaching God. The philosophic temperament with its passion for knowledge and truth traces the cause of bondage to *avidyā*, the ignorance of the absolute identity between the *jīva* and *Īs'vara*. Hence *jñāna yoga* employs the methods of analysis and elimination in its search for the one impersonal, attributeless Brahman, knowing which everything else is known. But the religion of devotion rejects the soulless, passionless state of inertness and vacuity that results from mere analysis and negation, and sets free the pent-up feeling of the *jīva* in the form of love and

longing for the 'Other' that gives it life and sustains its being. *Bhakti yoga* is a religion of deliverance and redemption from sin or *karma* and of union with God. *Jñāna yoga* attempts the removal of ignorance or *avidyā*. *Bhakti* is a positive longing for communion with the Supreme; *jñāna* is a negative method of eliminating the non-self by a process of *neti*. *Bhakti* shifts the centre from the internal to its eternal 'Other,' from the 'I' to the 'Thou'; *jñāna* shifts the centre from the external to the internal, from the 'Thou' to the 'I', or self-identity. *Jñāna* is realized in the passionless peace of *samādhi*. *Bhakti* is revelling in love, in the pangs of separation alternating with the elations of communion in the divine game of love. The *jñāni* expands into the boundless light of *samādhi*; the devotee as mystic is filled by the rapture of communion. The one seeks enlightenment; the other yearns for ecstasy.

One despairs of reconciling these two extremes and arriving at the common basis of *mumukṣutva*. Perhaps the psychological study of their origin and worth may afford the clue to a synthetic solution. The desire for freedom is rooted in the feeling for deliverance from sin or *karma* and *kāma* and separation in the one case, and the removal of ignorance or *avidyā* in the other. *Bhakti* may be the manifestation of the self-abasing instinct which, when spiritualized, takes the form of longing for God. There is another essential but opposite instinct in us, the instinct of self-love and self-assertion which is sublimated and changed into *jñāna* or realization of God as the self. With regard to their worth it may be stated that the mere speculative Advaitin is likely to mistake the academic knowledge of the intellect with its thought-chopping, soulless logic for the enlightenment coming from *samādhi* consciousness. The artificial repose induced by quietism

with its lapse into *laya* and void kills higher endeavour and aspiration. The repression of a passion defeats its purpose when the passion-gathering reactionary force from within bursts the bounds and wrecks the spiritual consciousness. On the other hand, devotion, if it is mere feeling, has also its shortcomings and pitfalls. The devotee may feel that his emotions are the voice of God speaking to his soul and take refuge in inspiration and immediate revelation. When passions are not disciplined by philosophy and are allowed to run riot in the name of mystic ecstasy, the result is often an inward chaos and emotional irresponsibility. Institutional religion may degenerate into a formal relation with *guru* and God, and the belief in their saving grace assumes the form of vicarious atonement, kills individual effort and breeds a habit of ethical stagnation. When the two methods of *jñāna* and *bhakti* are purged of all this dross, there remains a pure and residual element which is essential to their nature as aids to *mumukṣutva*. The differences between the two arise from the differences in the perspective. Though the temperament and the starting point may vary, the reference ultimately is to the same religious endeavour. Both insist on renouncing *ahaṅkāra* and realizing the *aham*. The sense of *avidyā* and *karma* with their opposite expressions in knowledge and love are after all two different attributes of the same being, namely, *cit* and *ānanda*. The conception of God as *sat, cit* and *ānanda* or *satyam, jñānam* and *ānandam* as existence and essence solves many of the problems of comparative religion. The devotee emphasizes the *ānanda* aspect which is concerned with the feeling and he loses himself in the love of the beloved One. But the intellect with its passion for unity demands an Absolute as pure consciousness or *cit*.

Religion is more a way of life than a philosophic view. It can be understood only as the spiritual search of the individual soul or *jīva* for God. It longs for a new immediacy, a direct perception of God in which, in the inimitable words of Tagore, we feel the throb of the Soul-life in our own soul. As the self is not reason nor feeling nor will, religion cannot be interpreted in the language of these mental states which are only the imperfect attributes of the ego. The four *yogas* elaborated by Vedānta for the attainment of release are mainly based on the recognition of these cardinal psychological states. Their inadequacy to meet the needs of religion may be stated as a case of negation by fulfilment; as long as the soul is not touched with *jñāna-bhakti*, their efficacy is only of doubtful worth. But *mumukṣutva* is an intense, irrepressible thirst of the spirit for God. It is the craving of the individual soul for divine life. This organic craving may originate in thought, feeling or will or in all of them. But whether it is produced by knowledge or devotion or action or by all of them, it is in effect the longing for release; it is a living function and a unique experience. Any attempt at analysis kills aspiration and leaves behind bloodless abstractions like thought and feeling. Just as a man immersed in water pants for breath, just as a man struggles hard to throw down a piece of burning charcoal placed on his head, so does a *mumukṣu* yearn for release from the unutterable woes of *samsāra* and pant restlessly for divine communion. The period of stress and storm, of trials and backslidings, of intense thought and burning anguish which intervenes before the birth of God-consciousness, is the mightiest of all conflicts ever waged by humanity. But the prospect of the joy of fruition and fulfilment transfigures sorrow into joy. The struggle itself is worth while and the *mumukṣu*

certainly prefers the spiritual aspiration of the soul to the futile joys of worldliness. When the *ahaṅkāra*-ridden ego sheds its ego-centric feeling made of *avidyā* and *karma*, lets go the hold and surrenders its thought and feeling with the grace of the *guru*, a flood of ecstasy pours into it, the little self is lost and swallowed up in the boundless expanse of self-effulgent light and immortal bliss. The grace of the *guru* is essential for attaining this stage. The God-hunger for the soul is more intense than the soul-hunger for God and the hunger is satisfied in mystic union when the soul is Brahmanized.

CHAPTER III

THE SPIRITUAL METHOD OF THE GURU

SOME years ago a young student called Satyakāma with a passion for philosophy and a religious bent of mind, not satisfied with secular life, renounced his study and his home and wandered restlessly in South India for many years in search of a *guru* who would allay the ever-increasing hunger of his soul for God-realization. Weary of vain search and filled with the agony of despair, he drifted in the end to the rock fort of Tiruchirappalli and ascended its steps. When he reached the top, a new feeling of hope and joy crept into his soul and elated his being. The sun began to set and the scenery around was sublime. Far below lay the historic city where time has written its story of human wrecks and triumphs. From the heart of humanity wailing over the world's wretchedness with myriad tongues, there came forth the sacred sound of '*Aum*' as if it soured to heaven. Nature wore her garb of evening prayer; the infinitude of space all around lay in meditative repose. The sun tired of his earthly rule put on an yellow robe and speedily sought the feet of Lord Raṅganātha in His island temple of S'rīraṅgam.

Satyakāma felt himself irresistibly drawn to a solitary retreat where, strange to say, there sat a *ṛṣi*-like old man rapt in *samādhi* radiating light and rapture all round

He felt as if he had returned to his own self. A thrill of joy coursed through his being and a strange, moon-like effulgence poured into his soul and flooded it with love. The *yogi* opened his eyes and embracing Satyakāma with fatherly affection said: "Satyakāma, how long am I to wait here for you?" The young man fell at his feet and, melting with gratitude, addressed his *guru* thus: "Oh Lord, tormented by the feeling of the impermanence of life, its sinfulness and misery, I sought so long in vain for my redeemer. Now I have discovered thee, I take refuge at thy feet. Tell me how I can see God and attain supreme happiness." The *guru* kept silent for a while and then looking wistfully into his soul, whispered: "Go back to your home and worship the gods of the universe as ordained in the *S'āstras*. They will grant you supreme happiness. Reflect, realize and return."

Satyakāma went down the hill pondering over his strange experiences. He then began to follow the teaching of his master. Gradually he realized in his life the truth of the *rahasya*. There is an unseen world consisting of larger and more God-like beings with different degrees of development with no absolute unity realized in it. The details of our life are causally determined by influences from that region in the form of miracles and providential rewards. Certain supernatural powers, however, assume hostile attitudes towards us confronting us at every turn and frustrating our expectations. It is essential, therefore, for us to enter into satisfactory relations with them. Besides, there are some departmental deities with different functions of their own and dwelling in particular regions of Heaven. We have to form alliances with the particular power whose favour we seek to attain, by means of adequate prayers and offerings. The worship, for example, of the sun god is

often a necessity. His co-operation has to be secured by suitable prayers and offerings as detailed in the *S'āstras*. Offerings to *pitṛs*, family gods and guardian spirits are followed by suitable boons. All the great religions of the world assert the truth of these beliefs in supernaturalism and polytheism. Mythology does not, however, satisfy the religious yearning. It is no religion at all. It is only a bargain with the heavenly powers for wealth, progeny and power. The adoration of a plurality of powers does not meet the demand of reason for unity. It outrages the intrinsic worth and dignity of the moral life. In the long run it degenerates into a crude form of anthropomorphism by which divine powers are invested with human passions. Instead of passion being spiritualized by such a worship, heaven itself becomes humanized. Besides, the pleasures of *Svarga* bear the stamp of impermanence and are tinged with the possibility of pain. The walls of the polytheistic heaven are often soiled and sullied by the pictures of insatiable lust, inordinate thirst for revenge and abnormal love of power and pride.

Thus reflected Satyakāma on the merits of polytheism. Finding that the gods were themselves in need of redemption, he was not satisfied with their worship. So he went back to his *guru* and narrated all his experiences and reflections. The teacher smiled graciously and said: "Well, Satyakāma, though the gods wish to please you, you are not pleased with them. Go back and do your *dharma* ordained by the *Dharma S'āstras*. The practice of *dharma* is the only way of securing supreme happiness. Reflect, realize and return."

Satyakāma returned pondering over the teaching of his master and began to follow it. Gradually, he realized in his life the truth of the *rahasya*. *Dharma* as ritualism derives its justification from the need for disciplining the restless and riotous

activity of the mind. An essential condition for its regulation consists in devising definite courses of action embodying the religious sentiment. Recognizing the above principle, religion has elaborated a scheme of injunctions or commandments offering adequate rewards and punishments for their fulfilment and violation. The *Vedic* injunctions are either obligatory or prohibitory. From this point of view, *karmas* are divided into three kinds: actions that produce evil, actions performed with a view to attaining desirable objects in this life or hereafter and expiatory ceremonies. A system of mind-fencing like the above purges the mind of all its unclean passions and leads to the attainment of happiness. In its highest reaches, ritualism is a code of life attuned to the will of God, which is expressed and enshrined in *S'āstraic* sanctions. Ritualism, however, does not satisfy the religious yearning and it is no religion at all. There is an aspect of externality in the whole process which fails to touch the deeper springs of religious aspiration. It may appeal to the sentiments of reverence for authority and love of discipline which are among the essential features of institutional religion. But it often degenerates into a dry and rigorous formalism and unmeaning sacerdotalism which subordinate inwardness and purity to prestige and exploitation. It finally lapses into a form of soulless, spiritual militarism created by fear and sustained by a system of rewards and punishments ending in utter demoralization. Ritualism as a religious institution often allies itself with state-craft and works by expediency. Its definiteness and discipline form an excellent virtue in its normal functioning; but when it overreaches the mark as it often does, it is degraded into fanaticism. Even in its normal activity, the *S'āstraic* sanction of the *Karma kāṇḍa* may sometimes collide with the general laws of righteousness. It may enforce duties

and rights but not the inner virtue of righteousness. It stifles the supreme demand of reason for the justification of unmeaning rituals and victimizes the votary by exploiting his weakness.

Satyakāma was not, therefore, satisfied with the ritualistic programme. He went back to his *guru* and narrated his experiences and reflections. The teacher smiled graciously and said: " Satyakāma, *karma* has purified your mind and I see a new brightness in your face. Go back and lead a life of righteousness by individual reflection. Righteousness is the only way of securing supreme happiness. Reflect, realize and return."

Satyakāma returned pondering over the teaching of his master and began to follow it. Gradually he realized in his life the truth of the *rahasya*. A life of righteousness involves purity of thought, word and deed. Life is impermanent and miserable. Sorrow is caused by the aching thirst for life, by the will to persevere in egoity. The extinction of desire leads to emancipation. In seeking the inner quiet, the mind lapses into quietism or inertia. The only way of escape from misery lies in the attainment of virtue by the practice of right thought, speech, action and rapture and by the realization of universal love and peace. The moral life is the supreme demand of reason; it is a categorical imperative deriving its compelling power from itself. It is not tainted by the desire for the fruits of action. Not even the gods can vanquish a man who has vanquished his desires. By self-mastery and universal love, a man attains to supreme happiness. But mere morality is not religion. Ethicism furnishes no positive basis for the performance of duty. It assigns no place to the higher emotions that well up from the deepest springs of being. A passionless

state of equanimity stifles the longing for spiritual rapture. If the extinction of desire is the ultimate ideal of life, it follows that all ethical endeavour must end in moral suicide. Morality may be a safe, negative, neutral background without any prepossessions or over-beliefs of doubtful value. But a system of negations without suggesting any positive affirmation is a logical impossibility. Empiricism is quite justified in doubting and denying the existence of an absolute moral law. Moral hope is rudely shaken by the fact that vice very often triumphs over virtue. Ethics does not afford any justification for preferring altruism to egoism. The stress and storm of the religious life, its groans and gleams, the colour and glow of love which transmutes sorrows into joys, are all absent in a mere moral scheme of life.

Satyakāma was, therefore, not satisfied with the empty life of virtue. He then went to his master and narrated his experiences and reflections. The *guru* smiled graciously and said: "Well, Satyakāma, know thyself; I see a new brightness in your face. It is true that mere morality does not satisfy the hunger of the soul. Righteousness should be grounded in Reality. Philosophic enquiry alone will give you supreme happiness. Reflect, realize and return."

Satyakāma returned pondering over the teaching of his master. He began to reflect on experience and thus realize the truth of the *rahasya*. Philosophy is the synthesis of experience as a whole. It enquires into the root causes of all beliefs. Science starts with certain basic concepts relevant to its particular subject-matter. Philosophy goes further and examines the validity of these concepts themselves by developing a view of reality which will be adequate to experience as a whole. The test of truth is defined as a principle of consistency or coherence. Life may

be evaluated in terms of truth, goodness and beauty. The principle of coherence impels us to posit an absolute transcendental identity realized in the manifold of experience. The Absolute is a synthesis of all categories. To deify one category at the expense of the others destroys the harmony of the whole system. System is a unity in difference and has no 'other' in it being itself a self-originating and self-differentiating principle. The passion of philosophy is the reduction of all knowledge into one comprehensive system. There are other schools of thought like pluralism and pragmatism which refuse to accept the above premises and conclusion. They feel that the all-devouring Absolute cuts at the very root of personality. The history of western thought has not been on the whole adequate for life. Modern philosophy begins with doubt and ends with ultimate doubts. In its love of mere speculation, it has divorced itself from religion and denied itself the solace of spiritual inspiration. Eastern philosophy has on the whole been an ally of religion and a justification of its worth. Free from the feeling of distrust of the intellect on the one hand and the deification of intuition on the other, it has invariably sought to rationalize faith and inspire reason.

But philosophy by itself does not allay the hunger of the soul. It stimulates thought as no other method does, but it does not satisfy it. Philosophy may deal with ultimate problems but is itself a problem, a riddle of logical thinking. Analysis arrests feeling and empties the springs of love. Thought implies doubt; it falters and hesitates. It freezes the soul and paralyses activity. Metaphysics is built on the quicksand of empty speculations. Thought erects an absolute and commits suicide in it. Even if it persists for ever in knowing reality, the infinite recedes like a mirage quickening

our hunger for knowledge without curing it. We may lift 'veil after veil' but still veil after veil is left behind. The problems of philosophy are really the riddles of the sphinx and no philosopher has solved them satisfactorily. The only hope of metaphysics lies in recognizing the inadequacy of its method and conclusions and allying itself with the deeper needs of the soul for religious and mystic satisfaction.

Satyakāma was not therefore satisfied with mere philosophical speculation. He returned to his master and narrated his experiences and reflections. The master smiled a gracious smile and said: "Satyakāma, I see a new brightness in your face. Philosophy undoubtedly starves the soul. God is the supreme need of the soul. Worship Him as the Father in Heaven and serve Him with all your might. Then you will secure supreme happiness. Reflect, realize and return."

Satyakāma returned home pondering over the sacred teaching of the master. The mention of God's name sent a thrill of joy into his heart. He is the Lord of creation, a transcendental Personality with infinite auspicious qualities, ever triumphing over evil, ignorance and sinfulness. Incarnation is a sure evidence of the redemptive impulse ever pulsating in the divine heart. It is the pledge of salvation. The utterance of His sacred name, the meditation of a most beauteous form and transcendent qualities and service to fellow-beings are the best methods of securing a place in His kingdom and thus attaining supreme happiness. Satyakāma then began to worship the Lord and serve Him with a new energy and enthusiasm which he never experienced before. Devoted to service, with praise in his lips and prayer in his heart, he found a new joy pulsating through his being, transfiguring even his deepest sorrows into joys. In such a prayerful communion there was no obliteration of individuality

but a new security and stability was added to it. The devotee becomes a partaker in divine life and serves Him in the evolution of His purpose.

But supernatural religion had no lasting charm for Satyakāma. There is an aspect of externality in outer devotion which does not appease the mystic hunger for the infinite and complete union with it. Love delights in self-forgetfulness and self-naughting and absorption which the sentiment of the fatherhood of an extra-cosmic God does not foster. The dogmatic temper with its jealousy for the honour of its deity cannot brook differences in the object and mode of worship. Its excessive devoutness develops into fanaticism and persecutional zeal. The institutional God does not tolerate the non-conformist. He is a departmental Deity who cuts the world into watertight compartments of the elect and the eliminated, offering no hope for the unbeliever. A God that sets apart a day for judging humanity and hurls the heathen into eternal hellish torture is not a redeemer. The doctrine of a mediator who sets free the redemptive impulse of God inspires us with hope and joy. But it sometimes discourages personal endeavour and justifies irresponsibility. The God of fear is also the God of mercy. Healthy-minded devotion, therefore, avoids the religion that seeks indulgence and perseveres in personal purification as a necessary concomitant of divine grace.

Satyakāma was not satisfied with the worship of an external designer. His yearning for more intimate communion became irrepressible. So he returned to his *guru* and narrated his experiences and reflections. The master smiled a gracious smile and said : " Satyakāma, I see a new brightness in your face which I never saw before. The idea of an extra-cosmic God stimulates the craving for God,

but it does not satisfy the desire for union and communion. Instead of looking for God in Heaven above, try to know thyself. Watch your thoughts and feelings and note where they arise. At the back of them all is the witness by knowing whom you will attain supreme peace. Reflect, realize and return."

Satyakāma returned pondering over the sacred teaching of the master. Realizing the supreme need for concentration, he renounced the world and sought a solitary place. There, on the banks of the Cauvery, he sat absorbed in meditation and self-analysis and watched the source of thought where the thinker exists without the thought. He soon discovered that, behind the three bodies, the three *guṇas*, the three states and the five *kos'as*, there remained a residuum of being, a real reality, an absolute which is the source of all attributes and modes but where the attributes and modes have no being. The physical bonds of his being were soon loosened. Sensations lost their meaning for him, consciousness became contentless and objectless. The idea of space, time and causation had melted away, his separate being was lost in a spaceless expanse of limitless light, where thought was not and enjoyment alone remained without the thinker and enjoyer. How long he remained in this superconscious state he knew not. But when he came back he felt himself narrowing down to a particular form. The world around seemed only an appearance. When the contracting process was complete, he realized his personal identity and felt the persisting power of the world around.

Thus he remained for some time. But his restless nature could find no enduring *s'ānti* even in this exalted state. The thought-stilling process, in its endeavour to suppress impure thought, suppresses all noble, intellectual aspirations

as well, and stops the springs of cognitional activity and love. The quest of the passionless state kills the very passion for that state. The spiritual life is thus devoid of all content and lapses into a state of vacuity and inertia. The analysis of the self with a view to eliminating the unreal is a process of abstraction and annihilation which freezes the emotions and paralyses the will. It is *jñāna yoga* of the wrong type which may lead to solipsism. Its chief fallacy consists in shifting the religious centre from the cosmic self to the individual ego and mistaking the *kaivalya* state of soul-cognition for the ineffable bliss of cosmic consciousness. It is when subjectivism allies itself with self-repressive asceticism that the chief danger of mere *jñāna yoga*, namely, *laya*, comes into prominence.

Satyakāma was not, therefore, satisfied with all this soul-stilling serenity. His ardour for self-transcending communion became irresistible beyond comparison. He returned to his master and narrated his experiences and reflections. The master smiled a gracious smile and, embracing him affectionately, said: "Well, Satyakāma, you are a very restless rambler in spirituality, that revolts against sectional thinking and sectarianism, delighting in every form of religion, but dissatisfied with all. That is not your fault; it is the spirit of the age. You have fairly stood all my tests. Let me now tell you what I feel in the matter. Every method practised in the right spirit in the logical and ethical way leads eventually to the same goal. But there is an intellectual justification for your discontent. You now see that religion should be different from mythology, ritualism, ethicism, metaphysics, deism and subjectivism. It may be defined as the quest of the soul or its organic craving for God, and it cannot be interpreted in terms of these values,

but they all contain germs of the experience of God-realization in a greater or less degree. Polytheism re-establishes our spiritual continuity with higher beings, but it does not satisfy the demand for unity. Ritualism recognizes the need for obeying the will of God and disciplines the mind; but it is often degraded to the level of soulless formalism which often clashes with the inner springs of righteousness and stifles the higher emotions of religion. Ethicism reconciles conduct with the God of righteousness; but it is a half-way house between aspiration and achievement, a negative position affording no justification for moral life. Philosophy discovers Truth and offers theoretic satisfaction, but its thought-chopping logic starves the heart and paralyses the will. Deism seeks God outside the cosmos, but it is afraid of soul-loss in the process of intimate communion. The believer stands before God with folded hands and elects to co-operate with Him in the evolution of His purpose. Pantheism does not know its own mind; it hesitates between absorption into God and identity with Him. Science may speak of God as the first cause. Ethics may recognize Him as a moral postulate. Philosophy may discern in Him the source of all knowledge. Deism may adore the Holy in Heaven. Pantheism may dissolve the soul in God. But none of these endeavours exhausts the meaning and value of spiritual experience as a whole; it is a unique state defying all attempt at explanation and affording no criterion for criticism. It is the intuition of the infinite and the fulfilment of the moral and spiritual quest.

"Though the exact content of the spiritual life cannot be defined formally, we can get some insight into its nature by the study of its results. It may be determined by the extent of its congruity with the whole of experience

and by its pragmatic worth in terms of truth, goodness and beauty. The main features of religion may be summed up in three phrases: absolute surrender and resignation to the will of God; intense love and yearning for God-realization; the attainment of happiness coupled with the sense of security. The other problems have very little pragmatic worth in the realm of religious life. The chief of them are: Is the world a creation or emanation of God, His sport or merely an illusion superimposed on reality? Is ultimate reality to be interpreted in terms of the one or the many? Is God *saguṇa* or *nirguṇa*? Is evil a reality or an illusion? Is salvation to be attained by personal endeavour or Divine grace? Is the ideal of salvation, fellowship with God, absorption or identity? These are the paradoxes of religion which cannot be easily solved by reason and which have no great value in spiritual life.

"The main conclusions, however, are stable and have inner value. Religion consists in resignation to the will of God. The individual will is a self-persisting, self-conserving principle seeking its own good very often to the exclusion of other wills and the will of God. Physical pain, mental misery and the sinfulness of the soul arise out of this collision with the Divine purpose as manifested in nature, society and spiritual life. To remove these evils, egoity should surrender itself completely to the will of God. Finite will should beat in harmony with Divine love. It should anchor itself in the 'ocean pacific' or *s'ānti*. Its centre should shift from the earthly 'me' to the cosmic 'Thou'. Surrender does not end in aimless drifting. Personality is not lost in surrender. It is enriched by the idea that God realizes Himself through us. When the self passes from the periphery of egoism to the Divine centre, it sacrifices itself, with a view to realizing itself. Intense love and yearning for God-realization is another

essential element of religion. Man, being made in the image of God, naturally longs for return to the very fount of Life, Light and Love. Love always passes out beyond itself and loses itself in the 'other.' Our deepest cravings lie in the cave of the heart where the Lord of Love is enshrined. In such a mystic yearning there is a feeling of 'self-alienation' in which the ego longs to pour itself out into God. When it is well developed, it acquires a super-normal intensity like the infinity of God Himself, which cannot be measured in terms of emotion, cognition or will. Intellect and emotion are poor, pale fragments of the soul which are swallowed up in the intensity of soul-hunger. When a man is immersed in water, he pants for breath. Likewise in an infinitely larger degree is the panting of the soul for God.

"Just as a man thirsts for God, so does God thirst for man. There comes a blessed moment in our life when we come face to face with the Lord of Love, when an enveloping and effulgent Presence enters our being and floods it with light and rapture. There is an immediacy in the whole experience other than that of sense-perception, the immediacy of God-vision transcending the limitations of time and space. There is a feeling of an objective Presence pervading us as our inner self. The evidence of God is rooted in such visions coming from the innermost regions of our being and in the possibility of similar experiences by others. Realization of God becomes the very breath by which we live. It adds a fresh zest to life and affords a new sense of security, a 'new reach of freedom and a new dimension of happiness.' In such a state of ineffable bliss and soul-ravishment, the intellect melts away, even the organic functions are suspended. This is the fruition and fulfilment of all human endeavour. The content of such an experience may be attunement with

God, co-existence, absorption or non-difference. It may be a theistic heaven of fellowship and service. The individual may be swallowed up in the ecstasy of God-intoxication or he may expand into infinity and become one with God. But it is enough for us to know that it is a return to God marked by the highest reaches of intellectual illumination, ethical exaltation and emotional ecstasy. You have struggled hard and you are blessed. There is no definite method for returning to God."

The *guru* could not proceed further. The super-sensuous state crept over him and he was lost in *samādhi*. It was a glorious sunset. Time reposed below in the city sleeping on the history of human endeavour. The space all around was a luminous expanse of celestial joy. The sun tired of his long reign wore the garb of *sannyāsa* and surrendered himself at the feet of S'rī Raṅganātha. A strange experience came over Satyakāma and his master. An irresistible impulse seized them to go down the hill and reach S'rīraṅgam. The pulse of spiritual hope began to beat quickly and elate them with maddening love. They found themselves in the presence of the Sleeping Beauty. A new effulgence and joy filled and flooded the whole temple. They rushed in. What became of them? Who can describe it?

CHAPTER IV

SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY TODAY

THE best way of retaining the soul-power of India is to keep alive her synthetic philosophic outlook by removing the barriers of isolation and exclusiveness on the one hand and the evils of the slavish imitation of alien ideas on the other. Science has destroyed distance only in the physical sense but not in the philosophic and spiritual sense. It is only philosophy applied to practical life that can really bring men together and make them live a new spiritual joint-family life. Philosophy in India is not divorced from life but has always permeated the popular mind and irradiated everyday life. What is now required is not more philosophy, but more philosophers who would, as heirs of India's cultural heritage, consecrate their lives to the pursuit of philosophic thinking and set an inspiring example to others in their views and ways of life. Contemporary philosophy in the East as well as in the West is anxious to integrate the different branches of knowledge like science, metaphysics, ethics and religion which have not been on cordial terms for a long time. To a student of synthetic philosophy, it is a fit and fascinating subject to watch the confluence of the various thought currents in modern philosophy. Synthesis is discerning unity amidst diversity and is different from the 'eclecticism of soapy minds'.

Science and Philosophy

Philosophy seeks to integrate all kinds of experience—scientific, moral, aesthetic and religious—and to solve the problem of knowledge synthetically. It enables us to criticise all categories in the light of an all-inclusive truth which transforms our outlook on life, by going beyond the partial and the fragmentary. Though intellectual in its method, it has to consider all questions of abiding human interest in a disinterested way, think them together and arrive at a comprehensive unity. Science and philosophy which have been at arm's length so long, owing to mutual distrust, are now anxious to appreciate each other's standpoint, and find out their common features. The dominant interest in contemporary philosophy is the integration of scientific knowledge with the totality of experience. The scientist has the advantage of focussing his attention on a particular section of knowledge, discovering the secrets of nature and arriving at the solidarity and universality of knowledge in a disinterested way. His problem is, however, self-limited by the specific way in which he puts his questions to nature and approaches the study of reality. He, however, oversteps his bounds when he turns philosopher and mistakes sectional thinking for the spirit of totality. Even mathematics, on whose pattern metaphysics was long modelled owing to its accuracy, gives us only abstract truths and does not aim at concrete unity. The modern philosopher is fully alive to the needs of a realistic approach to reality and constructs his system on the concrete facts of experience and seeks to find out the ultimate meaning and value of experience in all its aspects. Science and metaphysics have different subjects of inquiry, though they may adopt the same critical method. The scientist may use the logical

method, but is not a logician. Likewise, the philosopher may rely on the data of science for his enquiry, but is not a scientist. There can be no universal science just as there can be no philosophy of science. Physics and biology have separated from philosophy; but epistemology, ethics and religion are still with it. Psychology is on the borderland between science and philosophy, and by its unique position in the congresses of science and philosophy it can mediate between the two by reminding the scientist that every observation he makes presupposes the observer, and by telling the philosopher that in his introspection he should not forget the object and that his speculations should touch the earth and have solid foundations. Philosophy is philosophizing and both critical and constructive and it provides a corrective to the evils of sectional thinking and sterile or airy speculation.

EPISTEMOLOGY

What is valuable in current thought is the stress it lays on the ways of knowing truth or on the method of arriving at clear and distinct knowledge. The main contributions made to logic and metaphysics, especially those dealing with the antagonism between idealism and realism, reflect the modern tendency to seek more the points of convergence than those of divergence. Epistemology with the theory of the *pramāṇas* is the foundation of philosophy in the East as well as in the West and, as is crisply stated, if a man tries to break logic, logic will break him. The need is now felt for the co-ordination of the truths of rationalism and empiricism, or idealism and realism, from a higher point of view, which will do justice to both and thus

remove the feeling of estrangement. The chief postulate of knowledge is that reality is knowable. It is involved in experience and is neither prior to it nor deduced from it. The old rivalry between idealism and realism arose out of abstracting mind from matter, and regarding each as a thing-in-itself existing in its own right. The realist says that things alone are real, that experiencing makes no difference to the facts experienced and that the relations are external. The idealist says that a thing is only a mental construction and that there is no reality, but thinking makes it so. While subjective idealism ignores the reality of the external object, realism ignores the synthetic activity of thought. Modern thinkers are inclined to reconcile the differences between the two from various points of view. Neo-realism and traditional idealism affirm the existence of a world that is common to all minds. The principle of relativity recognizes the activity of the observer of the space-time continuum, and is said to support idealism in the sense that it makes knowledge an internal relation. The duality of the subject-object relation is the bedrock of logical experience. The relations are not external to the terms related, but are relevant and organic. They are more like the relation between the hand and the fingers than that between the hand and a piece of paper held by it. When the realist says that thoughts subsist logically and are as real as the things that exist, he approaches idealism. The idealist has to recognize the reality of social objects and inter-subjective intercourse and thus fall into line with the realist. The view of certain modern realists who refer to the organic inter-relation of processes and explain objects as unities which are self-identical, is nearly the same as the view of the idealists who affirm the reality of the universal as the life-blood of rational thought. The modern realist tries to know the

wood as well as the trees, and the modern idealist, the trees as well as the wood. Both of them agree in thinking that the judgments of fact and value are equally real from a higher standpoint in which reality and value coincide. The scientist as logician often mistakes realism for reality and the philosopher as mentalist mistakes idealism for mere ideas. Even in Indian epistemology, there is a tendency to regard S'aṅkara as a realist when he accepts the reality of the external world and Rāmānuja as an idealist when he lays stress on internal relations. The relation between mind and matter cannot be dissected, though the elements can be distinguished as modes of the All-Self.

The Philosophy of Nature

The triumphs of the physical sciences constitute the chief glory of modern science and it is claimed that, in future, metaphysics will be in the hands of those who know physics and that it will be the handmaid of physics. The dominant truth of the physical science is the concept of matter with its principle of uniformity of nature. Matter is energy and a cluster of events; it is not merely what is, but what does, and the materialized energy includes radio-activity. But when science turns into naturalistic philosophy and makes matter the whole of reality, it goes beyond its limits, and philosophy as a criticism of categories is justified in examining the assumption of science and the claims put forward by the materialist, naturalist or realist. The visible and tangible universe has certainly its own stability and objectivity, and is the common theatre of all human activity, and both the neo-realist and the absolutist agree in saying that nature is real and not created by our thinking. Matter

may have the quality of extension, but is external to the self and persists in its own being, and it cannot be spiritualized. The materialist is right when he insists on the reality of the physical world, but goes wrong only when he concludes that it is the only and the whole reality, and that life and consciousness emerge from the stuff of space-time as its offshoots and that, therefore, it is prior to, and has primacy over, them. Materialism often leads to mentalism. Even though matter is now thought of as less material, it can never be considered alive and conscious of itself. Life is spontaneous and self-active and different from radio-activity and physico-chemical changes. The promise and potency of self-consciousness are only in the living and not in the non-living, and the lower has to be explained in terms of the higher. The scientist explains the happenings in nature by the law of causation which is a methodological postulate and is true as far as it goes; but naturalistic metaphysics is one-sided as it ignores the reality of super-sensuous experience and creative evolution. Nature no doubt serves the purpose of life, but is not itself purposive. Matter is neither bare monad nor congealed spirit; it is only the garment of the spirit and not the spirit itself. The critical realist holds the view that the physical objects of science are self-contained existents which are unaffected by the percipient. The objects cognized by me are not created by me or are constituted by the act of my cognition; but it is an extreme view when realism aided by the physical sciences leads to materialism and naturalism. The object is not a bare *that* without the *what*; if it were, it would lead to scepticism. The pan-psychist goes to the other extreme when he denies the reality of inanimate things. Contemporary thought is anxious to avoid these extremes of materialism and mentalism when it insists on the

stability of the physical universe known as *acit* in Indian thought, but denies its self-containedness, and thereby escapes from the pitfalls of scepticism and subjectivism.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SELF

Modern psychology, unlike physics and physiology, is an important section in the Science and Philosophy congresses and has a unique value in synthetic philosophy as, in the treatment of the self, it can bring about an *entente cordiale* between naturalism and absolutism on the one hand and ethical religion on the other. Though naturalism and absolutism are opposed to each other in their method and conclusions, they agree in so far as they deny the meaning and value of personality. The naturalist depersonalises the self and treats it as a mere offshoot of matter or as an epiphenomenon. The absolutist thinks that the self suffers from self-contradiction and is a mere appearance or element of the absolute. The humanist and the personalist go to the other extreme in their revolt against naturalism and absolutism. The humanist makes man the measure of all things and the personalist denies the reality of physical objects. It is the prerogative of psychology to mediate between these extremes and establish the nature of the self and its value. Before it does so, its conflicting schools should come to a common understanding. Some psychologists explain mind as a response to stimulus and thus explain it away. Their view borders on materialism. Psychology is explained by them in terms of biology and biology in terms of physics. Others say that consciousness is a new quality that emerges from life. All biocis is said to be psycho-biocis. Still others say that the self is only a series of sensations; but a sensation

cannot be conscious of itself. Self-consciousness without selfhood is like the play of "Hamlet" without the prince of Denmark. To explain the mind without the self as its unity is to stultify its meaning. The psychologist as a scientist in his zeal for observing things forgets the observer or the experient, and thinks only of association of ideas, configurations and complexes. Still others rightly recognize that purpose is the central fact of psychology and that the self is personal and self-directive, and has the factors of knowing, feeling and willing. The life of reason has no origin in the animal life of man; but it is the essential quality of the self in its gradual ascent from reflex action to reflective action. The spiritual self is different from the mind-body and has the freedom to achieve the highest ideals of truth, goodness and beauty. The self known as *cit* in Indian thought has it own worth and dignity and its freedom cannot be explained away in terms of the scientific law of causation or the omnipotence of God. Though the self exists by itself, it is not isolated or exclusive. It has its value only in a society of persons and as a mode of the Absolute.

ONTOLOGY

The chief question in contemporary metaphysics as the theory of Being is whether Reality is one or many, or the one in the many, or whether it is the absolute experience, or Self; and though extremists are ranged in opposite camps in the solution of the problem, a distinct tendency to rapprochement is discernible in the leading exponents of the philosophy of today. The absolute idealist affirms the unity of the universe and the principle of totality as its vitalizing thought and seeks to discover the one all-inclusive whole

which is the ground of existence. He applies the principle of non-contradiction to discover the nature of the whole, finds that finite experiences and even God, self, and nature are self-contradictory and are mere appearances of reality, though there are different degrees of reality; he concludes that the absolute is a single all-inclusive experience which transcends all differences and embraces every discord in a transmuted form. A more moderate form of absolutism accepts the principle of immanence or identity in difference and says that reality is a systematic whole consisting of inter-related parts. Another form of absolutism interprets unity in terms of a totality of wills. The pluralist distrusts the monistic absolute as a colourless abstraction of thought or a static whole that stifles moral and religious experience and swallows up personality. He interprets reality as a pluralistic universe consisting of a multiplicity of monads or selves, each having its own exclusive existence. The personalist as an absolutist tries to compose the differences by accepting idealistically the existence of the absolute as supra-personal, but he denies the reality of external things. A true synthetic philosophy has to explain the reality of the system of nature as well as the society of selves and co-ordinate the realms of logic and metaphysics on the one hand, and ethics and religion on the other. It has to reconcile the claims of pragmatism and humanism, which reject absolutism, with those of realism which attacks the subjectivistic trend. The contention of the idealist that reality is spiritual has to be accepted, whether he is a monist or a pluralist, or adopts a middle course, and the reality of the physical world has also to be recognized; this is satisfied by regarding the Absolute as the All-Self immanent in all beings as their ultimate ground, and ethically transcendent as

the home of all the eternal values of life. Absolute experience presupposes an experiencing Self known as Brahman in Indian thought, which is supra-personal in the sense that it is more than personal and is perfect. This view accepts the theory of organic relations and denies only the separate reality of individual things and not the reality of the separate individual things. It meets the demands of monism and pluralism and the claims of logic and ethics.

Theories of Evolution

The problem of change and evolution occupies an important place in modern thought, and in spite of the confusion caused by the principle of indeterminacy used in physics invading all ranges of experience, and in spite of the conflicting views held by the extreme naturalists and absolutists, there is a tendency amongst some notable exponents to come to an understanding. The naturalistic view affirms the ultimate reality of matter and explains life, consciousness and personality as its offshoots or by-products. The evolution of matter is an ascending movement having the promise and potency of spiritual perfection. According to the theory of natural selection the living comes from the non-living and mind evolves from life; life is an adjustment to the environment, and in the struggle for existence, the fittest alone survive. Nature is red in tooth and claw and the world is like a huge gladiatorial show. Might alone is right and the supermen produced in the course of evolution reduce others to utter subjection by means of their tyrannic will-power. Some deny the law of progress and say that gradual degeneration and death are the end of human experience. The modern theories of emergence are variations of the theory

of evolution and they explain the higher as emerging from the lower. According to one school, the matrix of space-time is the primordial stuff of the universe, from which new qualities like life and mind emerge, and the next higher stage in its growth is the nisus towards deity. Another theory goes a step further and accepts God as the nisus through whose activity emergents emerge and is therefore less naturalistic. A third theory refers to a realm of eternal objects which require God as the principle of concretion for achieving actuality, abandoning naturalism altogether. This view is further developed by distinguishing between the absolute which is infinite possibility and God who is one possibility actualised. It is pointed out by way of criticism that emergents may not emerge but get submerged. Absolutism in its transcendental aspect points to reality which somehow divides itself into finite centres and gradually becomes the world of empirical experience. Another well-known theory insists on the principle of evolution that what is implicit alone becomes explicit and that reality as idea is the gradual dialectic unfolding in a rhythmic way of the One that goes out of Itself and then returns to Itself. In this way naturalism and absolutism agree in destroying the autonomy of ethical religion and explaining away the existence of the self and God as mere emergents or appearances of the Absolute. But a true theory of cosmology has to recognise the reality of nature, self and God by avoiding the extremes of naturalism and absolutism. This is rendered clear by distinguishing between the process of nature, the moral progress of man and the inner purpose of God which consists in soul-making. The events in nature happen and form a medium for the progress of man due to his freedom ; and God is the ground of the evolutionary process and the transcendent goal of moral life.

The Problem of Progress

Contemporary philosophy is deeply interested in the problem of progress and there are neo-realists and neo-idealists who insist on change as the very core of reality. Whether time is relative and variable, or uniform, it is a succession of events, and reality is endless becoming. Time is not change, but a form of changing things. The intellect dissects the free flow of time and makes sections of it ; but when we rise to intuition we feel the throb of life as creative evolution. According to another view, there is emergent evolution and the world of space-time is reaching towards the new quality of the Deity. The Deity comes from the universe and not the universe from the Deity and there is no end to the becoming. Still others prefer the moral attitude to the religious, accept the historic view and say that humanity is ever progressive. Man is never satisfied with what he is, but aspires to be more, and his aspiration is never fully achieved. The humanitarian and the political idealists always think of perfection and not of the perfect. The idealist-philosopher himself believes in dynamic process and not in a block universe, and says that reality is not thought, but thinking. The good is to be won by the race as a whole and it lies only in the future. The pragmatist has the will to believe that the world is perfectible and that it can be made better by man co-operating with God who is also finite. The absolutist is justified when he allies himself with religion in rejecting this philosophy of progressivism on the ground that time and change are in the Absolute, which is timelessly complete, and not that the Absolute is in time and change. There can be no universe without an underlying unity and no becoming without being. Infinite

becoming or progression is self-contradictory and purposeless. The scientist's view of becoming and the moralist's view of progress are different from the philosopher's view of reality as the goal of life. All change is only in the whole and not of the whole. Likewise it is the living faith of the religious man that the values of temporal life are perishing and futile, and that the free self can enter into divine life by self-transcendence and attain eternal security and stability. When man is deified without losing his own spiritual worth, he dies to live and attains immortal bliss. Immortality is not survival in life or eternal duration but is eternal life which is but the fulfilment of the temporal. The supra-personal self has no history though it gives a meaning to it.

Indian Philosophy Today

The dominant character of Indian philosophy today as of old is the synthesis of the theoretical and the practical sides of human nature. It is thus both speculative and spiritual and is truly called a *dars'ana*. It seeks to reinterpret the philosophic heritage of India in terms of the Western methods of scientific and philosophic criticism and thus makes its own specific contribution to philosophy as a whole. Of the systems of philosophy, orthodox or heterodox, Vedānta is now the most popular *dars'ana* and it accepts the essential features of other systems in so far as they do not contradict its own truths; such as the *nyāya* ways of knowing truth, the *sāṅkhyan* principles of psychology and evolution, the *yoga* scheme of psychic discipline, the *mīmāmsaka* theory of duty, and even the moral ideas of Jainism and Buddhism. All the systems are said to have their philosophic completion in the absolute idealism of

the Advaita type. In contemporary Indian philosophy, as expounded by many of its leading philosophers, Vedānta is often identified with Advaita, though Advaita itself is variously interpreted. Of the three chief *pramāṇas* of Vedānta, namely, *sruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava* (revelation, reason and intuition), the first is not very much stressed and it is presupposed in the presentations of Advaita. Vedāntins as rationalists rely on reason or *yukti* in the development of their system and fall into different groups. Some insist on the analysis of the three states of consciousness and point to the state of dreamless sleep as the nearest analogical explanation of Advaita. Others refer to the science of the self or *ātmavidya* and conclude dialectically that the 'I' is one, infinite, and eternal. The 'I' first poses itself, then opposes itself and finally reposes in itself. Still others speak of the philosophy of truth in which reality reveals itself as truth. The illusionists say that Brahman alone is real and that the world is false like a dream. Another group of Vedāntins say that the Absolute is beyond the logical intellect but it is possible for the philosopher to think God's thoughts after Him and have an integral intuition of Brahman. It is held by some that *mukti* will be complete only when there is *sarvamukti*. There are Vedāntic mystics who affirm the identity of thought and being by referring to a direct intuition of the self-identity of Brahman. The more realistic amongst the Vedāntins say that the world of nature, self and God is self-contradictory, but not illusory, and conclude that the real is not the real for thought, but is realized in the integral intuition of the Absolute. Advaita denies only difference, but does not affirm identity.

Indian philosophy is at present overweighted on the side of Advaita and unless the other Vedāntic systems are equally well-known and come into their own, the balance will not be

restored. This defect is mostly due to the default of the followers of those other systems. The criticism is often made that Indian philosophy favours illusionism and asceticism, is world-negating and is different to the needs of love and social service. Though this charge is unfounded and refuted by our leading philosophers, the critic is fully disarmed only if he is made aware of the ethical and religious foundations of Vedānta in Dvaita and Vis'iṣṭādvaita. Dvaita insists on the reality of absolute difference between God, the self and matter, and defines God as the instrumental cause of the universe. The *jīva* is finite and can never become infinite, and the text construed as " Thou art That " really means by reference to the context " Thou art not That." God can be attained only by *bhakti* and, even in *mukti*, there are eternal differences in the experience of God. As good and evil are exclusive, good men alone attain God and there is no hope for wicked men. Vis'iṣṭādvaita is a philosophy of religion which does equal justice to the metaphysical needs of synoptic thinking and the religious needs of universal love. The Absolute of philosophy is the God of religion and He is defined as the ground of existence and the goal of moral and spiritual life. He is immanent in all beings as the Life of their life and the Light of lights and is at the same time eminent as the pure and perfect. The finite self has its own unique value as a monad, but at the same time it is a mode of the Infinite sustained by Its life and dependent on Its redemptive love. It is eternal as an entity, but is not external to God. Moral life presupposes the freedom of the self to give up its egoism and attain self-sovereignty. Spiritual life is the realization of the self as different from the mind-body ; and the knowledge that it has its being in God. Religious consciousness is awakened when the purified self sheds its selfish

outlook and seeks union with God. The self-consciousness of the self is all-pervading and when the self is freed from the barriers of *avidyā* and *karma*, it can intuit the Absolute. To the Vis'iṣṭādvaitic mystic, God is essentially Love, and religion is the life of God in the love of man, in which God seeks man and man seeks God, and the lover and the beloved become one in the bliss of the unitive consciousness. Self-loss is not the loss of personality, but is its enrichment by participation in divine life and by loss in Personality. The freed self sees God in all beings and all beings in God, and effaces itself in the service of humanity till all human beings attain the highest ideals of spirituality, like truth, goodness and beauty and become one with God. Thus understood, Vis'iṣṭādvaita occupies a middle position between the Dvaita ideal of *mukti* as service to God and godly men and the Advaitic idea of *mukti* as the disappearance of the dual consciousness. S'aiva Siddhānta with its theory of *Pati*, *pas'u* and *pās'am* and the dual-non-dual relation between *Pati* and *pas'u* has affinities with Vis'iṣṭādvaita.

From the synthetic point of view, these three systems afford parallels to the Western theories of pantheism, theism and monism. But they are different from them as they dwell primarily on the relation between the finite self and the Infinite, and not on that between the universe and God. The tolerant spirit of Advaita is said to be brought out by the theory of degrees of truth and reality and the idea that truth is a passage from the lower phase of Dvaita to the intermediate state of Vis'iṣṭādvaita till the higher stage of Advaita is realized. A more tolerant view is that expressed by a supermystic of India that the three are the three aspects of the supermind. Dvaita gives the delight of seeing difference; Advaita is the realization of non-difference and Vis'iṣṭādvaital,

of the immanence of God in all beings. Another super-mystic affirms that Brahman is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* and is attained by both *bhakti* and *jñāna*.

Ethics and Social Philosophy

Ethics has to defend itself against the inroads of naturalism and absolutism into its domain, by insisting on the moral freedom of the self and its intrinsic and eternal value as a person and not as a thing. The self is not a by-product of matter, nor an emergence from it, nor again is it an appearance of the Absolute. Freedom in morals is not mere spontaneity, but involves real choice or decision ; and the self has the freedom to grow into godliness or lapse into animal life. The *Gītā* contains the essentials of morals according to Hinduism and it does not favour a mood of escapism or fatalism. *Karma* from the scientific point of view refers to causality on the moral plane and *prārabdha karma* has a determining influence on conduct. Though we cannot undo the past, the future is entirely in our hands, and not even a god can enslave a man who has conquered himself. From the ethical point of view, *karma* insists on the freedom of the self or *puruṣa* to overcome the solicitations of animal inclination and the utilitarian ends like success or gain. Every man can attain self-sovereignty and self-knowledge, and the true meaning of *karma* is disinterested action or freedom in action and not from action. From the religious point of view, *karma* implies consecrated service to humanity and to God or *Puruṣottama* who is the inner self of all *puruṣas* and the real actor and subject of all moral and spiritual life and His inner purpose is to make the *puruṣa* pure and perfect by deifying it.

The social philosophy of today reveals the tragic fact that culture and civilization are on the very verge of collapse owing to the decadence of faith in the moral values of life and the dignity of personality. The evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest affords a scientific and moral justification for the growth of the evils of cut-throat competition in all walks of life, and dictatorships or the rule of supermen with their will to enslave humanity. The gospel of material progress based on the triumphs of modern science has reduced man to a machine and a mere item in the programme of exploitation. The machine created by man has become a menace to his very being. The idea that the State is an end in itself and is beyond moral laws and that the individual is only a means to an end has undermined the foundations of true democracy and self-rule. The theory of chosen races and religions has increased racial bitterness and religious fanaticism. Religiosity has taken the place of religion and dogmas and rituals masquerade as spiritual faith; and religion itself is regarded as a morbid obsession. Psycho-analysis has exaggerated the meaning of the sexual instinct as an all-powerful but repressed feeling clamouring for satisfaction, and made sex training an education in nastiness and licence. Society itself is threatened with extinction by the war-mentality that rages everywhere and some thinkers say that life is now decadent and will soon be destroyed. It is the supreme task of the philosopher to restore the higher ideals of life and reconstruct society on a moral and spiritual basis. The acquisitive instinct is very strong in human nature and it no doubt defiles the mind, clogs the spirit and makes for division and hatred. But the solution lies not in the abolition of private property but in reconstructing society on the principle that riches may be hated but not the rich

man, and that one should get wealth in a righteous way for giving it freely to others. The sex instinct is likewise irrepressible but it should be humanized and spiritualized by insistence on the need for marriage as a social opportunity for developing the virtues of fidelity, reciprocal love and spiritual at-one-ment. War is no doubt a monstrous evil, but it is inevitable and even a necessary evil as long as man has the instinct of pugnacity. Man is no doubt now threatened with extinction by the very deadly weapons which he has created with his scientific knowledge. But a few living philosophers with a prophetic vision tell us that such destruction is but a prelude to a fresh construction of society and the founding of the kingdom of righteousness. Disarmament will be possible only when man is disarmed of his brutal instincts and his spiritual side is fully awakened. Behind the gloom of the present, there is visible to them the splendour of a new life of goodwill among mankind when economics, politics and ethics will be spiritualized and harmonized.

Religion

The age-long feuds between philosophy and religion, especially in Western thought, are now coming to a close owing to the new synthetic movement in philosophy which seeks their integration in a true philosophy of religion. It has the double task of reconciling religion and philosophy and finding a *via media* between pragmatism and absolutism. Religion, relying on supernatural revelation, makes reason subservient to faith and formulates a theology deduced from such faith. Religion distrusts science and speculative thinking on the ground that they often lead to agnosticism and endless doubts. Philosophy subjects theology to relentless criticism and rejects it as blind faith based on myths, rituals and

irrational feeling. But the mere analytic intellect only dissects feeling and cannot enter into the heart of religion and intuit its truths. The modern philosophy of religion, however, seeks to avoid the evils of dogmatism and fanaticism characteristic of institutional religion on the one hand and agnosticism or free thought on the other by insisting on the authority of personal experience. Both pragmatism and absolutism deny the primacy of religious consciousness and explain away the existence of God. The former makes God a finite being fighting victoriously against evil, with our co-operation, but its will to believe tends to become a make-believe. Some realistic thinkers say that God is not yet born but will soon be born. The absolutist thinks of God as a person suffering from self-contradiction and therefore a mere appearance of the Absolute. But the philosophy of religion refutes both these views and says that God is infinite and not finite and that the "mere absolute" is an all-devouring abyss. It rejects the theistic proofs of God by affirming that the best proof of the existence of God is the experience of God, and it is possible for every one who has the instinct for the Infinite or the hunger for God to satisfy it by a soul-sight of God and by enjoying the bliss of communion. While the philosopher seeks unity and defines God as the all-inclusive unity, the religious man seeks union with the same God as the supra-personal. When the seeker after God sheds his self-feeling, he can contact God and enjoy the bliss of unitive consciousness resulting in the illumination of the intellect and the exaltation of the will by philanthropic service. This experience is testified to by the mystics of all great world religions including the Christian, the Sufi and the Hindu.

The philosophy of religion collects and co-ordinates varieties of religious experiences in a systematic way and

evaluates them in the light of their immanent ideal of perfection. An important feature of the philosophy of today is the increasing recognition of the inseparable relation between reality and value. While science is said to study the realm of facts, ethics and aesthetics are said to deal with values, and this distinction has led to a cleavage between the two kinds of studies and resulted in open hostility. But now there is a tendency in philosophy to recognize the inter-relation between the two. A true philosophy is as much interested in the apprehension of facts as in the appreciation of values. To be aware of a thing also implies the appraisement of its value. Value judgments are therefore said to have as much ontological status as judgments of facts. The conative and affective sides of experience are as important as the cognitive as *tatva* and *puruṣārtha* go together. Values are not variable and subjective, but are intrinsic and objective. The highest values of life are truth, goodness and beauty, and they are personal or spiritual experiences. If values are emptied of such spiritual or personal content, they become abstract or meaningless. They are the highest ideals of life, and when they are realized, they become ultimate and eternal. The philosophy of religion treats such ultimate values as the attributes of God in whom they are always self-realized. God is not only the ground of existence but also the home of values. When the self is freed from ignorance, evil and ugliness, it has a soul-sight of God, becomes perfect, participates in divine life and becomes godly. The value and destiny of the individual consist in its ascent to God and attaining the eternal bliss of divine life. The ultimate values are transvalued in that state and become eternal. Eternal life is the fulfilment of the temporal and according to one Indian philosopher spiritual life is not only an ascent from the stage of matter to the

supermind, but also a descent from the super-mind to matter and the world is now approaching a stage when this harmony will be effected and there will be a new race of super-spiritual men. From the point of view of a true philosophy of religion, religion is one though religions vary and it is possible for the world religions to come to an understanding and establish a fraternity of faiths as a first step towards a federation of peoples. India is no doubt the meeting ground of religions. But if the founders and foundations of world religions are understood from the mystic or personal as distinguished from the theological and institutional aspects, the followers of each religion may then know inductively the best of the other religions and appreciate their common features. Modern life suffers from racialism in social life, sectional thinking in science, nationalism in politics and fanaticism in religion. What is sorely needed to-day is a new synoptic outlook that will combine the seriousness of the thinker with the social virtues of the man of action, break down the barriers of departmental thinking and exclusiveness, heal all discords and give a new spiritual direction to society.

If ideals rule the world in their own silent way, Indian philosophy is still alert and alive as can be judged from the lives and teachings of our men of genius who have achieved international reputation in the aesthetic, moral, philosophical and mystic aspects. Our poet-philosopher who gathers wisdom from all sources by direct contact with reality freed from the tangle of self-interest and has a direct vision of the kinship of nature and man speaks to us of the joy of beauty and the truth of love which he intuits by self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice. The moral genius of India has recognized the reality of moral evil in its individual and social aspects and has shown the way of overcoming it by love and by

self-suffering. Evil by contact with good becomes sterile and self-destructive and thus gives rise to the reign of universal love. The modern *yogī* of India insists on a new integration of divine life in which there will be a gradual ascent to supra-mental life as well as a descent into the physical life with a view to spiritualizing it. He has a vision of a universal transformation of society as a whole in the future by the descent of divine life on earth and the creation of a new race of super-spiritual men. The religious prophet of India lived and realized the truths of various religions and heralded a new age in which all religions will be harmonized without losing their individuality. The Indian philosophers today with their synthetic thinking and synoptic vision have already attempted a new orientation of Indian thought by utilising the best thoughts of the West and interpreting the West to the East and the East to the West and thus bringing about a better understanding between them. India's service to the world is the gift of her spirituality. In the words of one of India's leading philosophers, the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity have a deep spiritual meaning. The freedom of man is the freedom of the self-development of divinity in man. The equality of men implies the recognition of the same God-head in all human beings, and the ideal of brotherhood is a unity of mind and feeling based upon the inner spirituality of man. Thus the political ideals of the West can be spiritualized. Freedom in the positive sense is to be utilized by the free man in the service of the ideals of world-welfare by his renouncing the egoistic and individualistic outlook. All men are equal in the sense that they have the same divine destiny. This view furnishes the most inspiring motive for intellectual co-operation and inter-religious understanding so necessary for realizing the ideal of the federation

of the world. Such a consummation can never be achieved unless mankind gives up its present antagonisms based on differences of race, culture and religion. It is up to the Indian philosopher with his age-long aptitude for solving world problems, to face the present confusion, examine its causes and point the way out of it. Synthetic philosophy today thus integrates science, psychology, ethics, religion and philosophy by expounding God or Brahman as the ground of existents and the goal of experience by equating the Absolute of philosophy with the God of religion, by identifying *bhakti* with *jñāna* and by the idea that godliness or deification is the best test of the existence of the Deity and that spirituality and service are aspects of the same Divine experience.

CHAPTER V

SYNTHETIC RELIGION TODAY

RELIGION today is relegated to the background and is threatened with extinction and the chief contributory causes are the following. Firstly, Communism aided by dialectical materialism has a constitutional hatred of religion and it is gradually undermining the very vitality of man, especially of the younger generation. Secondly, the growth of science has not been favourable to the promotion of the religious consciousness and the inerrancy of *S'āstra.* As William James says, the medical materialism of today traces the religious phenomenon to physical and mental disorders. Its emotional excitability is traceable to abnormalities like hysteria and epilepsy. Freudian psychology explains religion as the development of repressed sexual instinct. *Bhakti* is treated as an emotional aberration allied to opium eating. Thirdly, absolutism of the Bradleyan type treats religion as an appearance of the Absolute and not as real. The God idea is considered self-contradictory and said to require transcendence. Absolutism is as fatal in religion as despotism in politics and dogmatism in theology. Fourthly, the time spirit does not seem to favour the factors of religion known as ritualism and mythology. Secularism and humanitarianism suit the rationalistic temper of the age more than supernaturalism and unquestioning faith in an unseen world.

The only way by which religion can be enthroned in the hearts of men is to give it a reorientation by stressing the essential and univeral aspects and not the accidental and the particular. Judged from this standpoint, religion is different from ritualism, mythology, animism, totemism, magic and occultism. It is the venture of the spirit of man to discover God in all and beyond, who may be called the Inner Self immortal, that makes for universal redemption. The comparative method breaks down the barriers and boundaries that divide sects and then brings them together. It should be the endeavour of the synoptic thinker to insist on the comparative study of all religions by all men and the application of the synthetic method to bring out the common features of religions without omitting their individuality. The chief requisites are: An insight into the soul of each religion. It has a right to be understood in the light of its best elements as expounded by its founders and illustrated by its exemplars. A lofty view of God as immanent in all of us and yet outside us as pure and perfect. The knowledge of the self as a shining spiritual entity or personality which is eternal and blissful. A living faith in the ultimate redemption of all beings. Religion should satisfy the highest values of truth, goodness and beauty. A sympathetic insight into the soul of each religion, which should be synoptic and not sectional.

Some modern interpreters of Hinduism influenced by the Western methods of historic criticism reject the traditional view and say that the Vedas were composed by primitive Āryans at different times and in different places and that their religion was anthropomorphic and polytheistic. They worshipped the forces of nature. Anthropomorphism is closely allied to animism, magic and fetichism. Polytheism grew into the monistic idealism of the *Upaniṣads*

and lapsed into the theism of the *Sūtras* and the *Gītā*. The Vedic gods Viṣṇu and S'iva became supreme in the *Purāṇic* period and are the chief deities of Vaiṣṇavism and S'aivism today. Hinduism has a popular and philosophic side and the popular side consists of mythology and ritualism and is contained in the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and the *Āgamas*. The philosophic side reaches its climax in idealistic monism; it says that religion is for the mass mind and philosophy is for the thinking few. Even the Personal God is only an appearance of the Absolute. Some add that the *Upaniṣads* support monism and the *Gītā* and the *Sūtras*, theism. Such views are entirely opposed to tradition and scriptural integrity and are due to prejudice. The Veda is impersonal and eternal and it is the same as the *Upaniṣad*. It is unfair to religion to say that it is for the mass mind and that philosophy transcends the religious consciousness. Hinduism as a religion is theistic or pan-entheistic and is impersonal in origin, and it is as old as human nature; if philosophy transcends religion, it is outside the scope of religion and we are not concerned with it. Hegel's view that Hinduism occupies the lowest place in religious development and that Christianity is the crown of religion betrays prejudice and Hegel gives up his case when he says that absolutism is a higher stage than religion. The view that religion is at first tribal, then national and then universal is simply not true. The Semitic view that religion is a historic revelation is plausible if it does not deny the similar faith of other people. Buddhism is strictly not a religion, but in Buddhistic countries Buddha takes the place of Buddhi and the Bodhisatva ideal has affinities with Vaiṣṇavism. Thus, it will be seen that all the great world religions are essentially theistic and they

deal with nature, man and God and refer to God as a personal or supra-personal Being, who, as the source of all finite beings, has spiritual relations with them and redeems them from their career of ignorance, evil and ugliness. It is our task now to explain the methods by which they may be viewed as aspects of one synthetic view of religion which breaks down the barriers of departmental thinking and heals all disorders. This view involves a deep comparative study of the world religions from the idealistic as different from the genetic stand-point. To clarify its nature, it may be subdivided into a number of problems.

What is the Authority of Religion?

Is it revelational faith or philosophic thinking or direct intuition? Each of these has its own values. Faith has a certain fixity and finality and it does not admit of doubt or compromise. This is the province of theology. Theology makes reason subservient to faith and deduces its dogmas and doctrines from the given truths. Doubting these dogmas becomes a heresy and a capital offence. Theology is thus fatally opposed to philosophy; but philosophy revolts against the dogmatism of theology and seeks to find out the nature of truth by intellectual speculation. It dissects all thoughts by doubting them but ends with ultimate doubts. Thus theology and reason are extremes leading to dogmatism on the one hand and agnosticism on the other. It is at this stage that mysticism steps in and it says that God can be directly experienced and this experience is the best proof of the existence of God. The synthetic method gives a place to each of these stand-points and defines scripture as a body of ultimate truths or verities which can be verified by personal experience and thus rationally justified.

Is Religion Deductive or Inductive?

Another way of stating the problem is: Is the religious method deductive or inductive? The former is the method of formal logic and it is the way of *siddhānta* and the principle of the excluded middle. It may be illustrated thus: Of the world religions, Hinduism and Christianity both cannot be true as both are contradictories and there is no middle ground between them. Christianity is the only revealed historic religion and therefore it is true. Hinduism is false and it is a heresy; since truth is compelling and coercive, it should be forced on the unbeliever or heretic. This is the logic of fanaticism and eternal damnation. This view is based on prejudice and is the way of persecution. The two religions may be complementary and not contradictory. Then the whole reasoning falls to the ground. Induction corrects this fanaticism and it says that religion is a matter of spiritual experimentation and direct experience. It can be verified by appeal to personal experience and such experiences may be collated and classified. The world religions are expressions of such mystic experience. The synthetic method avoids the dogmas of formal logic and the variations of the inductive hazard and regards them as supplementing each other. *Siddhānta* is as necessary as synthesis.

Is Religion as Philosophy Realistic or Idealistic?

The solution of this question depends on the meaning of the terms 'realism' and 'idealism' as theories of the knowledge of reality. Realism insists on the world or reality being outside consciousness. In its extreme form it gives

primacy to matter or *prakṛti* and describes the mind as matter conscious of itself. In this way it identifies realism with materialism or naturalism and tends towards agnosticism, as matter as a thing in itself is outside knowledge. Idealism goes to the other extreme by denying extra-mental reality. It says that reality is in my consciousness or consciousness as such. In its fully developed form of absolute idealism, it makes the real rational. Reality is the absolute as ideal construction and the God of religion is less real than the Absolute as God is finite. If realism ends in agnosticism, idealism ends in subjectivism as the absolute is only my idea or idea of it. Both are fatal to the religious consciousness as they lead to materialism and mentalism. But they correct each other and are helpful in synoptic thinking. Matter and the self are both real and though they are distinct entities, they are not separable. If nature is for the self, the self is for God the All-Self who is in both nature and the self. The absolute of idealism as the All-Self or Vāsudeva is the personal God of realism and this view is midway between monism and theism and satisfies the tests of knowing Reality.

Is Religion Intuitionism or Institutionalism?

Every religion insists on the mystic experience of God as an inner revelation and realization. It is possible for man to have a direct or immediate experience of God. The mystic can dive into divinity and specialize in spirituality. There are occasions in the life of every individual when he gets a new spiritual vision which exalts him and fills him with the idea of deathlessness and the ecstasy of mystic union. But the chief danger of mysticism is that it is subjective. The voices and visions of God reported by various mystics may

be due to physical and mental disorders, ignorance, caprice and excessive emotional reactions. It may be said that there is no stability or objectivity in the mystic experience. Therefore, the institutionalists say that religion should be organized and should make for social uplift. Corporate life is a moral and spiritual discipline and is an environment for the evolving mystic. It is in this way that the idea of churches and creeds arises. For example, the Catholics believe that the church is as infallible as God and its uniformity ultimately is calculated to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth. In the same way Islam insists on annexing the heathen world to God by proselytizing and even by persecution. But this is once again the way of exclusiveness and intolerance and no religion has so far succeeded in establishing a uniform faith. Uniformity is neither desirable nor possible. Every man's faith is ultimately determined by his endowment, environment and education and no two people have the same kind of endowment or environment. Very often religious organization is a kind of departmental religion and the organization grows by allying itself with the state and works by force and diplomacy. The church and the state then work together but sometimes come into dreadful conflict and the result is disastrous to both. It is impossible to have a theocracy, because theocracy becomes the rule by priestcraft and its despotic power. The state protests against this domination and becomes purely secular or the state and the church may come to a political compromise which is based more upon diplomacy than on inner purity. The problem becomes more complicated in internationalism. There cannot be a universal church just as there cannot be a universal state. The only alternative to institutionalism as standardized religion is the emphasis on inner mystic experience. Mysticism

and institutionalism should correct and complement each other and thus help in building up a league of faiths which insists both on individual experience and social solidarity.

Is the Religious Method Psychological and Pragmatic or Historical?

Psychology studies the inner religious experience of man and his spiritual education and enlightenment. It may be called the experimental proof of God, *e.g.*, the Quakers rely more upon such personal experiences than on mere literalism and dogma. From this point of view there are three types of experience: (1) the intellectual attitude; (2) the attitude of feeling like fear, reverence and love; and (3) the belief in the working of God's will in human will which is the will attitude. But the chief difficulty of this method is that it is subjective and not objective. The pragmatist thinks of the value of the experience and he insists more upon the value-judgment than on these judgments. The test of true experience is three-fold. It should satisfy the intellect, elevate our conduct and promise eternal blessedness. If a religious experience satisfies these three tests, then it is true. But there can be no value-judgment without any judgment. Besides, truth may work, but whatever works may not be true. If truth is trueness, it may become a make-believe. The historic method corrects these extremes and refers to the working of God in history. It says that human history shows the one increasing purpose of God and it consists in establishing His Kingdom on earth.

Does Religion aim at Uniformity or Unity?

The theological mind is more interested in standardizing faith than in promoting personal freedom. It is of the

drill sergeant type that insists on reducing spiritual truth to rigid rules and converting the free flow of intuitions into mechanical fixity. Literalism and legalism take the place of inner spontaneity. The will has not freedom of choice in moral situations as everything is pre-ordained and the religious man is to blindly follow scriptural commands as interpreted by a dominating priestcraft. Reason is entirely subservient to scriptural authority which is infallible and to an inviolable church and Hinduism, as a conglomeration of faiths, is a heresy. The doctrine of uniformity is thus compelling and coercive and leads to fanaticism and the persecuting zeal of the spiritual militarist. The principle of unity in difference is more comprehensive and tolerant than that of uniformity. Religion as the experience of God is ultimately one; but it is in practice determined by the psychological variations of temperament and aptitude called *adhikāribheda* in Hinduism. Hinduism recognizes the principle of choice or *iṣṭadevata* and each man is allowed to practise his *sādhana* provided it satisfies the tests of intellectual clarity and moral cleanliness. Absolutism and theism have to be at peace with each other as neither can oust out the other. The great religions of the world have to understand and tolerate each other as there cannot be one uniform religious system suitable for all. Each religion has its fixity and finality for its votary and all religions have to work together in a spirit of harmony and co-operation. But the historic method is vitiated by prejudice and intolerance. Many people in India apply the historic and evolutionary method and trace the history of Indian religion from Vedic polytheism to the pantheism of the *Upaniṣads* and the theism of the *Gītā*. But this conclusion is not supported by facts. The historic method favours the theory of the chosen people. We have

to avoid the extremes of pragmatism on the one hand and the historic view on the other; and each corrects and complements the other. The individual and his convictions are as important as corporate religion and loyalty to its conventions.

The Religious Method of Immanent Criticism

The method of immanent criticism that is adopted here holds that every religion has its own tradition and soul though there is the same oversoul that is immanent in all of them. God resides in the heart of all beings and in all sects and systems. He is in all beings and all beings are in Him. Yet He is outside them as a transcendental Being who is pure and perfect. Immanence brings out mystic intimacy and transcendence brings out holy ethical eminence. God may be defined as Power or Presence or Inner Self but He is essentially Love and His one purpose is universal redemption. All souls are alike as they come from God and go to God. The best test of spirituality is God-realization and service to all. The chief means of seeking God is absolute surrender to His redemptive purpose and thirsting for communion with Him. All religions are universal only in this sense. The idea of fellowship of faiths is described in a variety of ways: Toleration is not indifferentism or expediency but is acceptance and assimilation. It is opposed to the cynical view that all religions are equally true, they are equally false, and they are equally expedient. Eclecticism pieces together the best in each religion, like the Christian idea of fatherhood, the Islamic idea of brotherhood, the Buddhistic view of benevolence and the Hindu view of mystic intimacy. But it is only an arithmetical view different from the true synthetic

spirit of assimilation. The theory that all religions are complementary, on the analogy of colours in the white light ignores the integrity of each religion. The ladder theory suffers from the same defect. The geometrical analogy that religions are radii from the same Divine centre shows some synthetic insight. But the artist's analogy of each religion being a note in the Divine symphony is more sound than the above, as it equates synthetic insight with universal love.

CHAPTER VI

SYSTEM OF VEDĀNTA AS A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

THE history of religion reveals a perpetual antagonism between the domain of science and supernatural revelation. The warfare between reason and belief is conducted with fatal weapons in five different fields and each is threatened with dissolution and death by the other. There are five fundamental concepts of reality known as atom, life, consciousness, reason and intuition corresponding to the Vedāntic terms *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*. The world-views presented by the studies dealing with these categories, *viz.*, the physical sciences, biology, psychology, philosophy and aesthetics, are termed as mechanism, vitalism, pan-psychism, rationalism and subjective mysticism. Religion organizes its own forces of supernaturalism, animism, anthropomorphism, theology and fundamentalism and offers battle to the five kingdoms of science on their own terms. Science employs the canons of higher criticism based on the evidence of sense-perception and reasoning and shakes theology to its very foundations. Theology relying on supersensuous knowledge seeks to demolish reason and reject the heresies of science.

The philosophy of religion mediates between the two extremes and harmonizes their differences from a higher point of view.

Mechanism employs the concept of atoms and explains the laws of nature with mathematical accuracy in the light of logical methods. Naturalism thus reigns supreme in the physical order revealed to us in sense-perception, regards the cosmos as a collocation of physico-chemical changes. Suns and stars move endlessly in a soulless way. The soul is a by-product of matter and phosphorescence. Beliefs arise from the dance of atoms in the brain, freedom is only a fiction and spiritual life is a secretion of the diseased brain. But mechanism is only a device of thought and it does not exhaust experience. The religious feeling is outraged and it ousts materialism altogether. Where naturalism ends, supernaturalism begins. Supernaturalism distrusts sense-perception and appeals to myths and miracles. It is the faith in the pantheon of spirits which are benevolent as well as hostile to human interests. By a suitable system of sacrifices and prayers, the votary propitiates the deities and is rewarded with property, progeny and power. But polytheism does not satisfy the logical demand for unity and the moral demand for inner purity. The belief in miracles is not warranted by experience. Besides, the value of miracles is more important than their existence and the belief creates caprice in the Divine nature. The propensity in man to deify desires and their objects creates the polytheistic heaven and its pleasures are perishing and painful. That heaven itself is soiled by unruly passions and perpetual warfare.

Biology explains Reality in terms of teleology and substitutes the living organism made of cells for the mere mechanical aggregate. Protoplasm and the *prāṇa* originate

and function from within and are not externally determined like matter and motion. Life has the power of self-emergence and spontaneity and has a special mode of behaviour. The living do not evolve from the non-living but are due to vital impulse. Life responds to the stimulus, reproduces itself and is sustained by persistence and variation. The vitalist views reality as a creative impulse, *elan vital* or entelechy. The vitalist idea of entity is a mythical and mysterious thing acting blindly without any intelligent direction and inevitably lands us in animism. Animism is the belief that the source of life is breath or *prāṇa* different from the body and it attributes life and divinity to the natural forces. The soul is the double or the shadow of the body, survives after death and haunts the graveyard. Animism gives rise to the belief in ancestral worship, fetichism and supernaturalism. But vitalism and animism do not cover all the known facts of reality and religious experience and afford no stability or security.

Psychology marks the transition from the category of cell to that of sensation. It studies consciousness as a stream of presentations with conative and affective elements giving rise to the perception of the empirical self. Reality is *manomaya* and is mental and monadic and these monads are centres of appetition and form a realm of ends. The mental series cannot be reduced to material particles or vital units. But mentalism is as one-sided as mechanism and commits us to subjectivism. Religion reacts against this pan-psychism and grows into anthropomorphism. This theory ascribes the origin of the universe to Divine thought, feeling and will and thus interprets the Divine nature on the analogy of human experience. God is a personality with a body and mind akin to our own. But anthropomorphism is a form

of picture-making and is due to the tendency in man to regard all beings as like himself and therefore he makes God in his own image and attributes to Him his own form and feeling. His personal God is the result of the personifying tendency natural to man and His will and power are so capricious and cruel that the apologist of theism finds the problem an ultimate mystery. The kingdom of God is designed on the model of the human state and suffers from all its psychological limitations.

Reality is *vijñānamaya* or rational. The category of reason marks the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness or discursive thought. It employs the logical method of discovering and determining truth and advances arguments to prove the Being of God. Hume attacks in a classical way the cardinal proofs of natural theology and brings out clearly the antagonism between science and superstition. All reasoning, from design to designer, from idea to existence and from effect to cause, is due to the false light of the 'transcendental shrine'; to infer the infinite from the finite exceeds the limits of reason. Rationalism, whether it is metaphysical or theological, ends in agnosticism and positivism. There is no passage from nature to nature's God and the proofs of God admit of no finality or consistency. Thought cannot transcend itself and in its attempts to erect the Absolute, it commits suicide. Religion protests against rationalism and distrusts reason and takes refuge in traditionalism and scriptural faith. Reason with its cold logic is impervious to the demands of the heart and by analysing feelings, it ultimately annihilates them. Philosophy stimulates thought but does not satisfy it and allay the hunger of the soul. Gnosticism affirming the knowability of God is answered by agnosticism and agnosticism ends in absolutism

and thus a vicious circle is formed. Absolutism which is the completion of agnosticism invites us to worship the universe and its unity and affords no scope for love.

Reality is *ānandamaya* or the bliss of mystic intuition; sense-perception and reason are not the only gateways of knowledge. While rationalism infers truth, mysticism intuits it at one stroke, without going through any logical stages. Reason dissects reality in the interests of life and only gives us spatial diagrams. Reason gives us partial views of God, but intuition invades the infinite and has a vision of the whole. The rationalist worships at the gate of God, but the mystic enters the inner shrine and has an immediate apprehension. Owing to this spontaneity, intuition claims its own certitude. Theology disputes the claims of mysticism, rejects it as a mere subjective feeling and takes its stand on the bedrock of revelation. Scripture as the Word of God is the only source of spiritual faith and is impersonal, infallible and eternal. Being a direct communication of God, every scriptural text is absolutely trustworthy. But historic and higher criticism is entirely opposed to this fundamentalist faith and it evaluates its authority in terms of human values.

It is the task of the philosophy of religion to eliminate the incrustations of religion and discover the residual elements which form its kernel. By employing the scientific method and the canons of immanent criticism, it examines the varieties of religious experience set forth successively in supernaturalism, animism, anthropomorphism, dogmatism and fundamentalism, selects the essential and eternal principles underlying them and co-ordinates them into a systematic whole. The higher alone explains the lower and spiritual truths are discovered only by spiritual life. Religion is the thought of God revealed in faith and realized in intuition,

Every soul has the divine right to seek for God, its inner life and light, see Him face to face and thus attain absolute freedom from sin, sorrow and ignorance. The eternal verities of religion are verifiable in personal experience and are embodied in the logical idea of rationality, the moral idea of righteousness and the aesthetic idea of rapture. While philosophy gropes for God without any security or stability in its speculation, theology becomes dogmatic and fanatical by substituting sect for system and ritualism for righteousness. But in the philosophy of religion, religion illumines philosophy, and philosophy justifies religion. Revelation is a body of eternal objective and spiritual truths treasured up in scripture and realizable by intuition. Religion mediates between revelation and intuition and corrects the dogmatism of the former and subjectivism of the latter. The fallacy of anthropomorphism is removed by spiritualizing human values. Man is made in the image of God and he can grow into His transcendental purity and perfection. The goodness of man is consummated in the grace of God and godliness. The greatest miracle of religion lies in the immanence of God in the impure soul with a view to redeeming it from its sinful career. Spiritual truths are often clothed in sense-experience and the symbol should be distinguished from its sense. Sin is only an accident and is ultimately a case of self-alienation, and when the soul is cleansed, it shines in the light of God and is lost in immortal bliss. Vedānta as the true philosophy of religion describes religious experience and also justifies it by a system of thought. It is the philosophy of *Upaniṣadic* experience summed up in the *Vedānta Sūtras*. A brief attempt is made here to expound it.

The system of Vedānta is the formulation of the eternal mystic truths enshrined in the *Upaniṣads* and directly revealed

to the *ṛṣis* who are specialists in spirituality. Their interpretation by later system builders, *āstika* and *nāstika*, led to baffling complexity both in the framing of the problems and in their solutions and to consequent intellectual chaos. It was Vyāsa, with his rare genius for *Brahmajñāna* and synthetic insight into the soul of *S'ruti*, that discovered, by the light of reason, its inner meaning and framed it into a coherent whole in the *Brahma Sūtras*. The subsequent history of philosophy and religion shows the divergence between mere metaphysical speculation and religious experience which has made the former an empty dialectics and the latter blind faith or dogma. The *Sūtras* of Vyāsa are said by some to be more intellectual than intuitional or spiritual on the ground that they aim more at a systematic view of the *Upaniṣads* than in stressing the spiritual way of *Brahmānubhava*. But this interpretation is precisely wrong as Vyāsa was both a systematizer and a seer, an *ācārya* and a *ṛṣi* and his whole aim was to show that the *Upaniṣads* are both a view and a way. *Tatva* or reality is philosophically expounded in order that the nature of reality may be spiritually realized. It is the supreme merit of the teaching of Kapisthalam Des'ikācāryasvāmi that he as a Vedāntin following the Vyāsa way struck the keynote of the philosophy of religion and rediscovered the synthetic truth that metaphysics and mysticism are one and there is no divorce between *tatvajñāna* and *anubhava*. The supreme value of the synthetic method of the Svāmi lies in the co-ordination of the *S'ruti* and the *Sūtras* and the determination of their exact meaning without the aid of the commentaries and the revelation of the organic unity of the metaphysical, moral and mystic aspects of Vedānta, namely, *tattva*, *hita* and *puruṣārtha*. The master thought of the *Upaniṣad* is in the text "*Brahmavid āpnoti*

param " or " he who knows Brahman attains the highest ". The *Sūtrakāra* devotes four chapters to discover by the dialectic method or light of reason the exact nature of its meaning. The first two chapters are a metaphysical enquiry into the nature of Brahman or *tatva* as the cosmic ground by knowing which everything is known, the third brings out the moral and spiritual means of knowing Brahman or *hita* and the fourth refers to Brahman as the supreme goal of spiritual endeavour (*āpnoti param*). Brahman is the ground of existence and the goal of experience; Brahman is the root of philosophic endeavour and the fruit of religious experience. What is logically and ontologically determined as the Supreme *sat* without a second is the source of existence as well as the end of moral and mystic quest. All the chapters, sections and *sūtras* teach the same truth as an organic whole of parts. The whole is the sum of the parts and the parts are the whole and the organic unity of the work is so integral that each part vibrates with the life of the whole which is the soul of the system. Though the system of Vedānta is philosophically the establishment of Truth as *siddhānta* by refuting and rejecting rival theories disjunctively, it is really a synthesis that accepts what is true in each rival system and accepts it as an element in the integral unity. It was the Svāmi's object to show that every system and sect embodies Brahman in the same way as every soul embodies the Supreme Soul as its Self.

As the *jñāna* and *anubhava* of Brahman are one, every part of the first chapter which sums up the wisdom of the *Upaniṣads* aims at philosophical satisfactoriness and mystic satisfaction. The first part of the chapter establishes the nature of Brahman as the *sat* or the Absolute and at the same time the mystic goal of religion. The *adhikaraṇa*

equates Brahman, the secondless *sat*, with *Īśvara*, the cosmic ground. The One wills to be the many and becomes the manifold of *cit* and *acit* as the One is in the many and therefore manifests Itself as the many. What is called creation is really a sportive spontaneity or *līlā* of love and is the redemptive impulse of soul-making by which the soul is deified by God without abolishing its distinctiveness. The *Sūtra* begins with the definition of Brahman (*janmādi*) and ends with the description of divine destiny (*apunarāvarti*). Definition is the beginning of knowledge *Brahmajñāna* and the end of knowledge is *Brahmānubhava* or attaining *Brahmabhāva*. Brahman is knowable and is known; is apprehended as the 'That' and comprehended as the 'What'.

The next topic known as the *Ānandamaya Adhikaraṇa* refers to Brahman as the transcendentally blissful one delighting in imparting its bliss to the *jīva* in the state of *sāmyam* and *Brahmanizing* it. The next topic denies the anthropomorphic view of popular religion which humanizes God by saying that the Shining One in the sun is not the finite self but the sinless one that is pure and that purifies the finite. The subject of every Vedic judgment is the "That" which is the whole of Reality or Brahman. In the *anubhava* aspect, Brahman is enjoyed not in His ontological *svarūpa*, but in the mystic *rūpa* or formless form of Beauty and the mystic is transported into ecstasy. The succeeding topic discusses the mechanical view of the universe and insists on the reality of divine life as the supreme endeavour and end of every *ātman*. Brahman is *prāpya* and *prāpaka*. Another topic is eschatological and in its delineation of *Paramapada* as the eternal home of every *mukta*, it refutes the mechanical view of *mokṣa-loka* in terms of space-time and refers to it as an ever-effulgent world yonder where matter shines without any

mutation, time is under the form of eternity and the *ātman* is *Brahmanized.* The last topic in this *pāda* shows that the worship of every *deva* like Indra and Brahmā connotes by the principle of co-ordination, that of *Devadeva* or the Supreme Self as is exemplified in the intuition of Vāmadeva and Prahlāda. The Vedas are not polytheistic or pantheistic as they insist on the unity of the cosmos and the union of every self with the Supreme Self who is not as all beings but is in all beings as the Being of their being.

The second section of the first chapter consists of six topics and establishes the supremacy of Brahman by ruling out the claims of the finite self. The first topic determines the meaning of the pantheistic text, "All this is Brahman", and defines the nature of the Supreme Self as the Soul of the universe but without even the shadow of its imperfections. This meditation of Brahman as the Self of all guarantees salvation to the devotee, as the fulfilment of his religious experience. With a mind freed from all inclinations arising out of desire and aversion and equipped with the seven virtues beginning with *viveka*, Prahlāda realized Nārāyaṇa as the Inner Self of all and attained *samadarsana* by which he lost all sense of the distinction between friend and foe and between self and others. Brahman has a radiant and formless form of His own and wills and realizes the True and the Good. Out of His abundant love and mercy, He enters the heart of the devotee and imparts to him the fragrant deliciousness of His bliss. The second topic refers to the destructive function of Brahman which consists in reabsorption as different from extinction. The Lord moulds matter for the making of the soul in accordance with His moral law. Even this destructive function arises from His sportive and redemptive impulse. When the soul sinks into

sin and sensuality, the Lord, in His infinite mercy, stops temporarily the cosmic process and deprives the *jīva* of his organs of sense-experience so that there may be no further incentive to evil, like a loving father curing the waywardness of his son by imposing physical restrictions.

The two selves that live in the cave of the heart are the finite and the Infinite. The Infinite Lord in His boundless tenderness is unable to bear the separation of His other self and stations Himself in his heart with a view to leading him back to His highest abode or state. The third topic relating to the Immortal within the eye refers neither to the *jīva* nor to a mere reflection, but to the Inner Immortal Ruler whose bliss is infinite and who, out of supreme generosity imparts it to His devotee by leading him in glory to the region of immortality. The fourth topic deals with Brahman as the Inner Immortal Ruler (*antaryāmin*) and the relationship between the universe and Brahman as body and soul. This truth strikes the keynote of the whole of Vedāntic thought and experience. Brahman, the Absolute Self of the universe, is the Life of our life, its source and sustenance, the Inner and Immortal Ruler, who is the Will of our will and who is, at the same time, the means and the end. On this view alone can we find the reconciliation of monistic and dualistic texts and when this truth is intuitively realized in religious experience, the soul is seen to be an organ or *ams'a* of God and it voluntarily surrenders itself with all its belongings to God and the godly and is immersed in the joy of His joy. The fifth topic points to Brahman as the Imperishable (*akṣara*). Brahman alone is all-pervading and eternal and is higher than the *jīva* in the same way as the *jīva* is higher than *prakṛti*. The text extols this truth as the highest wisdom or *vidyā* by knowing which everything else is known. In

its *anubhava* aspect, the text directs the aspirant to the practice of *bhakti* as the highest *yoga* for attaining oneness with Brahman (*sāmyam*) in the sense of inseparable union. Brahman is identical with Vāsudeva who resides in all and from whom all derive their being. He is also Bhagavān in the fullest sense of the term, the Supreme Person with the six perfections beginning with *jñāna.* The sixth topic is on the meditation of Brahman in the form of a Person as the perfect *Vais'vānara* Self having the whole universe for His body, though, in His real nature, He is beyond this world of space-time and causality. Arjuna was dazed with a vision of this *visvarūpa.* This form of meditation leads the seeker after salvation to the highest region of the Lord. Brahman has thus an infinity of perfections and is, as it were, a treasure hidden in the *Upaniṣads.*

The first topic in the third section states that the Being who is described as the warp and the woof of the earth, the sky and heaven, is no other than the highest Brahman. On Him depends the uniformity of the process of nature and on Him also the attainment of salvation and immortality. He has His own formless form in His non-material abode and it is by His splendour that the sun, the moon and the stars shine. At the same time, in his boundless mercy, He abides in the hearts of all and assumes the manifold bodies of gods, men and the lower animals without relinquishing the infinity of His perfections with a view to leading them back to the region of His immortal bliss. Even as the waters of the Ganges lose themselves in the sea, the finite self divests itself of name and form resulting from *karma* and becomes one with Brahman without losing its individuality. The second topic declares that " the Infinite (or *Bhūman*) beyond which there is nothing else to be known " is Brahman

of whose absolute bliss all the pleasures and happiness of this empirical life are but partial manifestations. The world of experience is in its essence blissful but the finite self perceives it as apart from Brahman owing to its distorted vision caused by *karma*. This accounts for the sorrows of *samsāra* ; but the seer who perceives Brahman as the true self of all is immersed in the all-absorbing bliss of *Bhūman* or the Absolute.

The third topic treats of the *Upaniṣad* which describes the imperishable (*Akṣara Vidyā*). It refutes the materialistic view of the Sāṅkhyas and proves that the epithet 'imperishable' can be predicated only of Brahman. The previous meditations are contemplations on Brahman as the Creator, the Destroyer and the Inner Ruler of the universe. But this topic concerns itself with Brahman as its Sustainer. It is the will of *Īśvara* that controls the wheel of time and the uniform behaviour of the sun, the moon and the stars and thus sustains the physical and moral life of all beings. From the point of view of spiritual experience (*anubhava*), God is the Father and the Ruler. The instinct of parental love, the protecting care of the kings of the earth and the guardianship of the Manus and the gods are only partial expressions of the sustaining impulse of the Supreme. The key to a proper understanding of all the texts of the *Upaniṣads* is furnished by the fourth topic which defines the nature of the term " He " or Brahman in the aphorism by stating His determining qualities. He is higher than the highest, absolutely perfect and abides in the world beyond. It is this knowledge alone which leads the seeker after salvation to attain the supreme realm beyond the world of *karma* and enjoy the ecstatic vision of the immediate presence of God.

In the fifth topic the subject of inquiry is the text relating to the "ether of the heart which is the city of

Brahman ", who has the eight physical and moral perfections like eternity, purity and bliss and who is also the support of the universe. The qualities indicated herein rule out the possibility of the term " ether " referring to matter or the finite self and establish its appropriateness only to Brahman as He alone is absolutely free from even the shadow of imperfections and is also infinite in His perfections. Out of His love, the Lord abandons His supreme glory and becomes easy of access to all beings by dwelling in their very hearts. Within all created beings is hidden the rich Treasure of absolute Truth, Beauty and Bliss. The finite self blinded by *karma* is unable to perceive it; but the least *bhakti* is enough to elicit His saving grace which is ever available. The sins of the finite self are then consumed; the mind becomes eternally radiant; the soul attains the divine attributes mentioned in the *S'ruti* and finally reaches the resplendent region of everlasting bliss. The region beyond the cosmos is inconceivable by the bound self. Whatever is in space-time is not necessarily perishable. The *S'rutis* deny eternity only to the bodies resulting from *karma*; they do not deny the existence of pure space, time or body untainted by *karma*. The predication of will to the Supreme Being is in no sense an imperfection. A moral God with a supreme will is in no way less logical than a metaphysical Absolute.

The next topic treating of " the person of the size of the thumb standing within the self " refers to the Supreme Self and not the *jīva*, since the lordship (*īs'varatva*) described in the context can only apply to Him. Brahman, of course, transcends quantity or measure but to help the devotee in his contemplation, He abides in his heart. With the tenderness of the cow for its calf, the Lord of love seeks the finite self and longs to dwell within the body in spite of its

soilure. The last topic which speaks of "ether as the evolver of names and forms" identifies it with Brahman. Material ether is itself a product of evolution and cannot therefore be its cause; nor can it refer to the finite self as the *S'ruti* attributes omniscience and omnipotence to It. On the side of experience, this topic describes the condition of the released soul in the world of Brahman; Vāmadeva, freed from the bondage of *karma*, saw Brahman as the Self of all things giving each of them a name and a form but Himself unstained by them.

The author of the *Sūtras*, having established Brahman as the first cause of the universe in the first chapter, proceeds, in the second, to refute the conclusions of rival systems and answer the objections raised in them against Vedāntic thought. He first explodes the mechanical theory of the Sāṅkhyas and the dualism which they create between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa* without *Puruṣottama* are like the body without the soul. The atomic theory of the Vais'eṣikas known as the *Asatkāryavāda* which seeks to prove the existence of *Īs'vara* by inference ignores the limitations of the logical intellect. The criticism is directed next to the four schools of Buddhists who deny the eternity of *ātman* and maintain the theory of momentariness (*Kṣaṇikavāda*). There can be no deed without a doer and no *nirvāṇa* emptied of Brahman. The Buddhistic schools start with a kind of realism and subjective idealism and end with nihilism and are like the transition from Locke and Berkely to Hume. In the absolute negation of *S'ūnyavāda* there is no place for the *S'ūnyavādin* himself or his philosophy. The Jaina theory is pluralistic and atheistical. But in its historic development it filled up in meaning and has become Vedāntically inclined. The refutation of rival schools on the ground of their self-contradiction and human

origin does not imply their entire rejection. Truth is, of course, one and admits of no contradiction, but in so far as Brahman is the basis of their doctrines, their essential features have to be reinterpreted in terms of chronological and logical contexts before they can be assimilated. In expounding his system, each *ṛṣi* resorts to *arthavāda* or exaggeration with a view to emphasizing the chief features of his system. Sāṅkhyan cosmology, Yogic meditation and Vedic worship have their ultimate significance only in Brahman. S'aivism is also a version of Vedānta. Even *nāstika* schools have a place in Vedānta if they are freed from the defects of materialism, nihilism and humanism.

CHAPTER VII

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VEDĀNTA: S'AṄKARA-RĀMĀNUJA

THE keynote of synthetic Vedānta is furnished by the Vedic truth that *sat* is one though its seers express it in a variety of ways. Vedānta posits the knowability of noumenal reality having its fruition in the attainment of immortal bliss and the practice of universal service to all *jīvas*. It is not the result of mere logical thinking and moral effort based on *viveka* and *vairāgya* but is the direct realization of Brahman by the renouncement of worldliness. All the seers of Brahman and the *Brahmavādins* are agreed on the attainment of the Supreme in its negative and positive aspects though owing to psychic differences due to their temperament and training they express themselves in manifold ways. The chief among the varieties of Vedāntic experience are Advaita, Vis'iṣṭādvaita and Dvaita associated with the names of S'aṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva in the order of their historic development. They are, unlike the Western allied or parallel systems such as monism, theistic monism and theism, more interested in the study of the spiritual relation between Brahman and the *ātman* or the *jīva* than in the relation between Brahman and the universe. They all accept the *prasthānatraya* or the three authorities of the *Upaniṣads*, the *Gītā* and the *Sūtras* as one

integral *pramāṇa* and formulate their system in the light of *s'ruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava* or revelation, reason and direct experience. There is no conflict in their conclusions as they all aim at *Brahmajñāna* and the attainment of immortal life and bliss. Advaita, in its methodology, admits so to speak of three varieties, namely the Pure Advaita of Gauḍapāda, the Pure Practical Advaita of *Bimba-pratibimbavāda* and *Avacchedavāda* and the Practical Advaita stressing the ethico-religious aspect. The first variety relies on *ātmajñāna* by analysing away the psychic states of the three *avasthas* of the waking life, dreams and sleep. Pure consciousness is identical with itself when its states are thought away. In Pure Practical Advaita, the Advaita Vedāntin abandons the false reflections of Brahman in his *Bimba-pratibimbavāda* as *Īs'vara-jīva*. Brahman transcends the false limitations as *Is'vara-jīva* encased as it were in the macrocosmic and the microcosmic ether or *ākās'a*. It reverses the Hegelian method, as it passes from the synthesis of world-becoming to the antithesis between being and becoming and finally to the being of Brahman or thesis. Practical Advaita relies more on *anubhava* than on *yukti* and *s'ruti* and builds a ladder from Dvaita to Advaita by the practice of *karma yoga* and *upāsana* on Saguṇa Brahman and Nirguṇa Brahman and finally leads to the state of *jīvanmukti* and immediate *jñāna* and final *mukti*.

Vis'iṣṭādvaita is a variety of theistic monism which has a theistic as well as a mystic aspect. The former defines Brahman as *Īs'vara*, the Cosmic Ruler and Redeemer who wills the true and the good and becomes the manifold and the cosmic purpose is fulfilled when the creature resigns its will to the redemptive mercy of the *Rakṣaka* and dedicates itself to His *kaiṅkarya*. The Vis'iṣṭādvaitic mystic is drawn by

the bewitching Beauty of Bhagavān who resides in his heart as the Life and Love of its life and love and whose soul-hunger for the *bhakta* exceeds the God-hunger of the soul. Mystic experience is non-dual or *vis'iṣṭa aikya* and is not *svarūpa aikya* as the *ātman* is *Brahmanized* and attains its eternal bliss in Paramapada where matter shines without any modification or *pariṇāma*. According to Dvaita, which is Vedāntic theism, the freed soul realizes its eternal difference from *Īs'vara* and also the utter dependence on His will and the consummation of its bliss consists in service to God and the community of free and freed *jīvas*. Each *jīva* has its own monadic individuality and though it is eternal, its relations with *Īs'vara* and the other *jīvas* are only external. While *sāttvic jīvas* attain the world of God, *tāmasic* souls spurn the way of spirituality and service and enter everlasting hell.

There are other varieties of Vedānta which have their own individuality but which are not so well known as the three systems mentioned above. They may be historically enunciated as the twin schools of Bhedābheda identified with the names of Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāsa, Dvaitādvaita of Nimbārka and the allied teachings of Caitanya and Vallabha bearing on the Rādhākṛṣṇa cult of Bengal and Gujerat. The Bhedābheda theories of Bhāskara and Yādava mark the logical and ethical transition from the idealistic view of the *māyāvāda* of S'aṅkara through the realistic theory of the *upādhis* of Bhāskara and the *pariṇāmavāda* of Yādava to the Vis'iṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja. Bhedābheda is a relentless criticism of *māyāvāda*, anticipating the sevenfold objections of Rāmānuja, and of the theories of Nirguṇa Brahman and *jīvanmukta*. Bhāskara defines Bhedābheda as the relation of identity in difference in which the relation between Brahman

and the *jīva* is one of unity alone or *ekībhāva* and that Brahman and the world of *acit* as one of identity persisting in difference. The *jīva* is subject to finitude due to the *upādhis* or the limiting adjuncts of Brahman whose origin cannot be accounted for. *Mukti* is achieved by *jñāna-karma* and is not *jñāna* alone and it is the attainment of *ekībhāva* or union with Brahman by the removal of the barriers of finitude. It is a state of non-difference or *avibhāga* which is different from that of identity or *svarūpa aikya* of Advaita and that of union with Brahman or *vis'iṣṭa aikya* of Vis'iṣṭādvaita. To Yādava who affirms the truth of identity in difference as applicable to *cit* as well as *acit*, the world is a real emanation of Brahman, not *mithyopādhi* or *satyopādhi* or a false or real limitation of the Absolute but a *pariṇāma*. *Mukti* is consciousness of identity in difference in which the finite self sheds its selfishness and becomes one with the Absolute and at the same time different from it. Nimbārka's view of *bhinnābhinna* is a kind of mono-dualism midway between the *svābhāvika bhedābheda* theory of Yādava and the theory of Vis'iṣṭādvaita. In its *abhinna* aspect Brahman is self-realized and in its *bhinna* aspect it emanates by its *s'akti* into *cit* and *acit* or the subjects and objects of experience or *bhokta* and *bhogya* ; it is unity in trinity. Brahman, the Absolute, is Rādhākṛṣṇa, the Lord of love in a dual-non-dual form. In *mukti* attained through *bhakti-prapatti*, the *jīva* acquires *Brahmabhāva* and is one with Brahman in essence though different from Him in existence. Nimbārka's view has more affinities with Vis'iṣṭādvaita than Bhedābheda.

The Acintya Bhedābheda of S'rī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is nearer theism than the schools of Bhedābheda mentioned above as it refers to Brahman as a super-person with an enchanting form of beauty and in the dual relation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. By

His *s'akti*, He becomes *cit* and *acit*. The cosmos is the sport of Kṛṣṇa love and by His *hlādini s'akti* He imparts His beauty and bliss to the *jīva*. The chief means to *mukti* is *madhura-bhāva* having its fruition in bridal mysticism. The lover and the beloved are one in essence though they are two in existence. How there is non-duality and duality cannot be logically explained and the relation is therefore *acintya bhedābheda*. The S'uddhādvaita of Vallabha is also a form of Rādhākṛṣṇa love.

The varieties of Vedānta summarized above have ultimately the same aim, *viz.*, the realization of Brahman. *Sat* is one though the seers express It in various ways. This central truth is enshrined in the *S'ruti*, embodied in the *yukti* of the *Sūtras* and exemplified in the lives of seers. The systems of S'aṅkara and Rāmānuja have fundamental differences but their historic evolution reveals certain points of convergence essential for synthetic study. Of these two systems, Advaita is so widely known that Vedānta is often identified with it. Vis'iṣṭādvaita or theistic monism is allied to it and it may be studied in its theistic and monistic aspects as the religion of S'rī Vaiṣṇavism and the philosophy of Vis'iṣṭādvaita. Advaita is first considered and then is Vis'iṣṭādvaita taken up with a view to bringing out their points of convergence. Its teachings of non-difference or identity is interpreted broadly in two ways, namely, Pure Advaita and Practical Advaita. The method of the first is metaphysical and logical and that of the second is ethical and religious ; the former is deductive and the latter inductive.

Pure Advaita

Pure Advaita is transcendental experience *per se* and called the *pāramārthika* state of pure contentless consciousness.

Strictly speaking, it is beyond every relation, distinction and difference. Brahman is real and the world is unreal and non-existent like the son of a barren woman. Brahman exists in itself and by itself as *niravayava* and *nirguṇa* (formless and contentless). What is is and what is not is not and no 'ism' or *vāda* based on *bhedajñāna* can express the inexpressible. The various cosmological views are found to be self-contradictory and are self-stultifying. Brahman transcends the subject-object consciousness and the duality due to the logical intellect and theistic thinking. It is *sat-cit-ānanda*, being without becoming, one without a second (*ekam eva advitīyam*), indeterminate and is bliss itself. Advaita is being-knowing-bliss and really speaking there is no Advaitin or Advaita philosophy and *mūlāvidyā* as primeval nescience is simply non-existent. To the *jīvanmukta* who has realized Brahman the world is illusory like a dream and the illusion lasts as long as the *mukta* is swayed by *prārabdha karma* though its illusoriness disappears. *Karma* is a lapse from *samādhi* and the *mukta* is aware of the illusory show which vanishes at the onset of *samādhi*. *Jagat* appears as real but it is false like square circle. *Māyā* is what is non-existent, but it seems to be real. *Samādhi* is pure identity-consciousness, but the Advaitin as a *jīvanmukta* descends somehow to the plane of duality and delusion due to *karma*, though he is only a witness of the show.

The Advaitic metaphysicians are confronted by the somehow of *māyā-avidyā*. The Advaitic rationalist follows the natural light of reason and enquires into the nature of Brahman as *ātman*. According to the reflection theory (*Bimbapratibimbavāda*) *Īśvara* and *jīva* are the illusive emanations from Brahman. Substance exists in itself and by itself and the attribute is non-existent as determination is bare negation. Brahman is the *ātman* which poses itself, opposes as the

non-*ātman* and finally reposes in itself. It is the method of reality which is the reversal of Hegel's method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. From the idealistic standpoint Brahman is *dṛk* or the knower and is the only "I" that exists and the object or *dṛs'ya* is false. Brahman is *sākṣin* the spectator, and it sees nothing as there is no seer or seen object. It is the "That" without the "What". To the pure idealist or subjectivist, consciousness is absolute and its states or *avasthas* are creations which disappear in *turīya*. *Turīya* transcends *tripuṭi*. When the thoughts are thought away by self-analysis, the thinker alone remains and then there is no thinker or thought in *turīya*. It is absolute quiet or *kaivalya*. Thus Pure Advaita is a-logical, a-moral and a-cosmic, but it is not to be misconstrued as empty abstractionism and nihilism, as Advaita is literally *pūrṇa* or fulness and is thus liberally fulfilled. *Turīya* is *á priori* emptied of all content and is transcendental. Pure Advaita admits of degrees of truth. Dvaita for example is less true than Vis'iṣṭādvaita which is itself only partially true and Advaita alone is absolute Truth. The dualist is on the level of commonsense and the Vis'iṣṭādvaitin rises to the position of logical thinking but the highest state transcends commonsense and logical thinking. It is absolute and is beyond all degrees and dual-non-dual relations.

Practical Advaita

While Pure Advaita stresses the psychological and the idealistic aspects of *Brahmajñāna* as *ātmavicāra* or self-analysis, Practical Advaita relies on the cosmic and realistic side of *vyavahāra satya* and employs the ethico-religious method of *Brahmajñāna* itself. The former relies on *anubhava* or identity-consciousness and deduces by the *á priori* method

the philosophy of Advaita as an as-if. Knowledge is a process of self-transcendence and progression from truth to more truth till it is self-revealed. When the *jīva* realizes the ills of *samsāra* and the tragic waste of life in repeated births, it seeks liberation from such empirical life and becomes a *mumukṣu*. It cultivates the triple discipline of the mind in its aspects of thought, feeling and will known as *viveka*, *vairāgya* and the *s'ama* series. *Viveka* consists in discriminating the eternal from the non-eternal, *ātmā* from un-*ātmā*. *Vairāgya* follows from *viveka* and it is the renunciation of all hedonistic pursuits here and yonder. What is logically rejected as false is ethically renounced as fleeting. *Viveka* and *vairāgya* are stabilized by self-control which begins with the control of the senses and inner detachment and it grows into equanimity. When the mind is thus stilled, the *jīva* longs for the awakening of *advaita* consciousness from its age-long dualistic sleep.

The practice of the yogas is a preliminary disciplinary process and it may be called negation by fulfilment. When each stage is fulfilled, it transcends itself and points to a higher stage. The lower fulfils itself in the very act of self-transcendence and it is different from the way of sublation or disillusionment. *Karma yoga* is the practice of *niṣkāma karma* or duty emptied of all hedonistic and utilitarian considerations. It is a way of psychic purification, self-stripping or *cittas'uddhi* and the value of *karma yoga* lies in knowing its valuelessness. *Karma* implies the distinction between the doer and the deed and therefore the consciousness of duality which is opposed to that of non-duality or *advaitajñāna*. *Jñāna* is the way of *nivṛtti* and *karma* is the way of *pravṛtti* and the two are discrepant as light and darkness. *Brahmavicāra* consists of three stages, namely, *s'ravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. The first is the traditional knowledge

of the *S'āstra* as conveyed by a proper *guru*, the second is knowledge steadied by conviction and contemplation and the third leads to the immediate knowledge of the self-identity of Brahman. Initiation into Advaita leads to introversion and to the immediacy of *Brahmajñāna*. *Jñāna* is at first mediate or intellectual or *parokṣa* and finally immediate or intuitional or *aparokṣa*. It starts with *upāsanā* or meditation on Saguṇa Brahman and it leads to meditation on Nirguṇa Brahman. It is at first *apara bhakti* and it is fulfilled in *para bhakti*. Saguṇa Brahman is free from evil but it is Brahman conjoined with *māyā* and concretised by it. When the *upāsaka* is freed from *avidyā* and its effect, namely, *dvaita jñāna*, he intuits the meaning of the *mahāvākya*, 'Thou art That,' and attains *ekībhāva* (unitive consciousness). But even this experience is only a stepping stone and not a stopping place as it is based on identity in difference and is not pure identity. At long last, reflection on *Īs'vara* ends in the realization of Brahman and the *jīvanmukta* dies a nameless death in the spaceless *ākās'a* of *cit* and expires in eternal bliss. It is *jñāna* that is Brahman and not of Brahman. But owing to *prārabdha karma* the *mukta* descends into the plane of duality and relativity; but he is not affected by it. *Mukti* is identity-consciousness and the question of "here" and "yonder" is immaterial. Advaitic realization, according to some, has its full fruition in *anubhavādvaita* or *turiyātīta*. Brahman is ever existent and not an end newly attained. *Brahmajñāna* is *ajñāna* dispelled or the dawn of enlightenment and in this sense *jñāna* is an apprehension and attainment; being and knowing are one.

The ethico-religious aspect of Advaita has its logical conclusion in the non-dualistic view that Saguṇa Brahman

and Nirguṇa Brahman are identical and *advaita* is the denial of difference and duality and not merely the affirmation of identity. If Brahman and the world are non-different and not identical, Brahman and the *jīva* are also non-different. Likewise *jñāna* and *upāsanā* or *bhakti* are the same and the proof of the existence of Brahman is the mystic experience of Brahman and it exceeds all barriers of thought. Practical Advaita avoids the subjectivism of the psychological method and the nihilistic tendency of rationalistic Advaita bordering on Buddhistic dialectics and follows the safer course of ethico-religion which insists on devotion to the All-Self. The devotional way to the " That " in the *mahāvākya*, " Thou art That," is less risky and more reliable than the dialectic analysis of the " Thou ". Buddha denied God and relied on *buddhi*; but Buddhism which grew later replaced or displaced *buddhi* by Buddha and made him a God. Practical Advaita recognizes the reality of standpoints and stages and the way of progressive realization of Advaita. It has thus affinities with Vis'iṣṭādvaita as a true philosophy of religion.

S'RĪ VAIṢṆAVISM

S'rī Vaiṣṇavism stresses the religious aspect of Vis'iṣṭādvaita and is its practical side or theology. It has an ancient and immemorial tradition and is the confluence of Vedānta and *Divya Prabandha* called *Ubhaya Vedānta*. It is said to be inclined towards theism and is hostile to *Māyāvāda* and Buddhistic idealism and it makes common cause with Dvaita and its theory of difference or *Bhedavāda* in its rejection of *Māyāvāda*. Vis'iṣṭādvaita, as the name itself implies, has a non-dualistic tendency and it occupies a middle position between *bheda* and *abheda* and bridges the gulf between the two.

It is, however, different from the Bhedābheda schools of Bhāskara, Yādava and Nimbārka and S'ivādvaita of S'rīkaṇṭha. S'rī Vaiṣṇavism emphatically refutes and rejects all these schools of Vedānta and establishes the theistic view that Viṣṇu is the supreme and only cause of the universe of *cit* and *acit*, and that He is the Lord of S'rī or Lakṣmī who intercedes on behalf of the sinner and pleads for mercy.

The liberalizing tendency of S'rī Vaiṣṇavism is found in its theory of *pramāṇas* and scheme of Ubhaya Vedānta including the Vedāntic *pramāṇas* and Tamil *Prabandham* called Four Thousand on account of its 4,000 hymns sung by the Āzhvārs and Āṇḍāḷ. Though the two are co-ordinated as equally important, some are of opinion that the latter is purely *sātvic* and spiritual and that it alone recognizes the easy accessibility of the Lord in the form of *arca* in temple worship. One school is called the southern sect owing to its insistence on the spiritual value of *Divya Prabandhams*. S'rī Vaiṣṇavism accepts the five-fold form of Bhagavān as *para*, *vyūha*, *antaryāmi*, *avatāra* and *arca*, but on the whole prefers the last manifestation as the very incarnation of redemptive love. Lakṣmī co-exists with the Lord and is inseparable from Him as justice and mercy are ever conjoined. Love is wedded to law and they cannot be separated. Righteousness is one with redemption in the interests of the salvation of the *jīva*. One school regards S'rī as only a *jīva* or mediatrix and not as *Īs'varī*. S'rī Vaiṣṇavism extols the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a *s'araṇāgati s'āstra* or the scripture that guarantees salvation to all. The *Gītā* says that *bhakti* and *prapatti* are the chief means to *mukti*. *Prapatti* is preferred owing to its ease, universality and catholicity and is superior to *bhakti*. One school insists on the primacy of Divine grace or operative grace ; but another school refers to

co-operative grace and the meriting of mercy. Though the doctrines differ widely in practice, there is no doubt that *prapatti* opens the door of salvation to all, irrespective of their birth, caste, sex or occupation. Even the sub-humans are worthy of the saving grace of God. Service to all *jīvas*, especially to the devotees of God, is extolled as *kaiṅkarya* superior even to that of service to God. The attainment of Paramapada or Vaikuṇṭha by ascending the *devayāna* or *arcirādi* path is the highest *prāpya* or end of the *mumukṣu* or *prapanna*. The effect of all his *karma* is destroyed when he crosses the Viraja river and he then attains *sāyujya*, the highest state of *mukti*. Service to the Lord and S'rī here and yonder is both the *upāya* and the *upeya* or the endeavour and the end of the *s'eṣa* or *dāsa*. Ultimately He is Himself the means and the goal of life and the *mukta* does eternal *kaiṅkarya* to Him and the eternals that serve Him in His Kingdom. Vaikuṇṭha is the realm of Brahman beyond, space-time and the *jīva* is *Brahmanized* there.

VIS'IṢṬĀDVAITA[1]

The term Vis'iṣṭādvaita is not so simple as the terms Dvaita and Advaita, and the English equivalents for it like 'Qualified Non-dualism', 'Attributive Monism' and 'Pan-organismal Monism' are equally complex and confusing. It was an epoch-making day in the history of modern mystic religion when Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda) steeped in Western materialism met S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa and asked him whether he had seen God. The Paramahamsa said that he had a direct experience of God and that he could impart it to him. This event may be said to be the origin and meaning of

[1] Based on a lecture delivered on S'aṅkara-Rāmānuja Jayanti celebrations at S'rī Rāmakrishna Math, Madras 4.

the math and the mission. The teaching of the Paramahamsa stressed the central truth that God is both personal and impersonal (*saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*) and that He can be realized by *jñāna* and *bhakti*. This view throws a flood of light on Vis'iṣṭādvaita as a philosophy of religion and on the points of approach between S'aṅkara and Rāmānuja.

Religion is the realization of God, and the experiences of the three seers, Vāmadeva, Prahlāda and Nammāzhvār, furnish the key to the understanding of Vis'iṣṭādvaita. Ṛṣi Vāmadeva realized the all-pervasive nature of Brahman when he said "I am Manu, I am the Sun" and Prahlāda was gifted with the same *Brahmadṛṣṭi* or God-consciousness as is clear from his utterance: "All is from me, I am all, within me is all." Nammāzhvār's experience just before he attained *mukti* is true to type. His unitive consciousness was poetically described in a mystic way when he said that his separatist feeling was devoured by Divinity and that the bliss of union was ineffable and fecunditive. The *Upaniṣads*, in their outpourings of the integral experience of Brahman or *paripūrṇa Brahmānubhava*, bring out His essential nature or *svarūpa* as *satyam*, *jñānam* and *ānandam*. As the *Sadvidyā* says, He is the *sat* without a second who is eternally self-realized and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* explains *sat* as the Being of our being (*Tadbhāvabhāva*). *Sat* is like the juice in the tree which pervades it and, like salt dissolved in water, the *ātman* is dissolved in Brahman and is inseparable from It. Brahman is the Supreme Light (*Param Jyotis*) that illumines all lights and the *mukta* attains it as his true nature as the blindfolded man is free when his sight is restored and reaches his place. Another *Upaniṣad* defines Brahman as *ānandamaya* and, after attempting a calculus of pleasures, concludes that the bliss of Brahman is ineffable and indefinable and the only definition is experience-definition.

Ānanda is, like honey, the quintessence of all joys and the *mukta* revels in it. Reflection on Brahman expires in rapture. Like the river that merges into the sea, the *mukta* merges into the all-absorbing Absolute, but absorption is not the annihilation of the self, ending in *s'ūnya* or nothingness. The *mukta* sees Brahman in all beings and all beings in Brahman and his seeing (*dars'ana*) is not perception or conception but direct intuition. The *ātman* and Brahman are distinct in existence but they are non-dual in experience. This is Vis'iṣṭādvaitic experience and the philosophy is deduced deductively from this religious experience and the two are inseparable.

The *mumukṣu* or seeker after Brahman has one supreme qualification, namely, intense longing to realize Him and become one with Him. The question of the origin of the universe, of *avidyā* and *karma* or error and evil is only of secondary interest to him. The Vedāntins trace them to *māyā*, *upādhis*, *pariṇāma* or *karma*; but these are admitted to be insoluble problems. *Māyā* in S'aṅkara's Advaita is *anirvacanīya* or indescribable; the *upādhis* according to Bhāskara are somehow there in Brahman. *Pariṇāma* according to Yādava and others is inherent in Brahman and is in the nature of things. *Karma* has no beginning though it is a moral defect of the *jīva* and the idea of causation involved in it is cyclic. A patient suffering from a disease cares more for the cure than for the cause and the *mumukṣu* suffering from the ills of *samsāra* and *avidyā* and *karma* longs for freedom from *samsāra* and has no direct interest in cosmology and the causal analysis of the ills of life. No philosopher, Eastern or Western, has solved the mystery of life and it is ultimately not solved by reason but is dissolved by realizing Brahman. By knowing Brahman or the Absolute everything else is known, but not *vice versa*. Nārada in the

Upaniṣad was not satisfied with his specialization in all sciences and arts and he sought his teacher, Sanatkumāra, to initiate him into the knowledge of Brahman. Vyāsa, the author of the eighteen Purāṇas, was satisfied only when he realized the full incarnation of God as the moulder or redeemer of souls. Arjuna was terrified by the Cosmic form of the Lord but was drawn by his *svarūpa* as saving Light and Love.

The philosophy of Vis'iṣṭādvaita as of Vedānta in general deals with the nature of Brahman and His relation with the *ātman* or the *jīva*. Vis'iṣṭādvaita as the 'adjectival theory of the Absolute' stresses the internal relation between the two as substance and its inseparable attribute, mode or *apṛthak-siddha vis'eṣaṇa*, as in the example of light and its luminosity. Brahman is the substance or *sat* that exists in itself and by itself as the Absolute and the attribute inheres in it as its separable attribute or mode. The two can be distinguished but not divided and the *jīva* is a *vis'eṣa* or *prakāra* of Brahman and it is inseparable from It. This view is adequate as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough as the logical view of religion does not fully express its spiritual value. It is wrongly called qualified monism; Brahman is not the 'logical highest' but the intuitional Highest and therefore the term *S'ārīraka S'āstra* or 'Pan-organismal Monism' may be said to be more comprehensive than the term 'Vis'iṣṭādvaita'. *S'arīra* or body is sustained and directed by the soul or *S'arīrī* and exists for its satisfaction. The soul is likewise sustained and directed by Brahman and it exists for His satisfaction and therefore it may be called His *s'arīra*. The term organic relation or *s'arīra-s'arīri-bhāva* elicits the intimacy between the *jīva* and Brahman more than the term internal relation, but it is an analogy and it does not reveal fully spiritual

unity. The term pan-organismal monism is not quite adequate. Vis'iṣṭādvaita is sometimes called theism or even theistic monism, as it explains the ultimate spiritual relation between the Creator and the created or the *s'arīrī* as *s'eṣī* or *svāmī* and the *dāsa*, and extols the need for the institution of *prapatti* or absolute self-surrender to the feet of Lord Nārāyaṇa as the only way of salvation. Vis'iṣṭādvaita has its consummation in mystic unionism.

In the fourth chapter of *S'rī Bhāṣya*, which sums up the *Upaniṣads*, and in the tenth decade of Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāimozhi*, which is the autobiography of the *mukta's* ascent to the Absolute or Brahman, the terms '*para*', '*avibhāga*' and the all-devouring Self are used and they stress the nature of Vis'iṣṭādvaita as 'Unionism' and unitive experience. Brahman is not the soul or the Self, but the Absolute, and every thing, term and thought, every *cit* and *acit* connotes Him as its absolute meaning and value. They may have their own denotation but Brahman is their final connotation as He is the Self of all beings or *Sarvātmā* or Vāsudeva ; but the terms connotation and '*sāmānādhikaraṇya*' used in this context are logical and grammatical and not spiritual or mystical in their intent and content. The terms '*pūrṇa*' and '*bhūmā*' are more significant than the previous terms as they bring out the integral nature of Brahman and the unitive experience of *avibhāgatva*. Brahman is both the Supreme *sat* or Existence and the home of the eternal values of truth, goodness and beauty. Brahman is the God-head who is the True of the True (*satyasya satyam*) and is the ethically perfect without any taint. Logically He is the Light of lights (*jyotiṣām jyotis*) and He is the intuitional Highest as by knowing Him everything is known. Aesthetically He is the Beauty of beauties as

Bhuvanasundara and *Madanamohana* (cosmic and mystic Beauty). Whatever is separate or *anya* is trivial and has no value; but whatever is *ananya* or is inseparable is *bhūmā* or infinite. In this way, Brahman is defined as Life of our life, Light of lights and Inner Love Absolute and He *Brahmanizes* all *ātmans* or infinitizes them. The perfect alone makes for perfection and the Deity deifies the *jīva* by making it godly but not God Himself.

Every end implies a means or *sādhana* and the *mumukṣu* who seeks *mukti* follows the threefold ways of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, which are inter-related and continuous. *Karma Yoga* consists in the self shedding its selfishness or *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra*. They have to be rooted out by *niṣkāma karma* or doing one's duty without any inner inclination or *kāma* or caring for external consequences. By such renunciation (*vairāgya*), self-realization or *ātmajñāna* is effected. The *ātman* is known as eternal and self-effulgent and such *ātmajñāna* leads to *Brahmajñāna* and *bhakti*. Brahman is the All-Self or Vāsudeva and it is only by knowing Him and becoming one with Him that *mukti* is attained. Thus work, wisdom and worship are ultimately one. Brahman is Himself the means and the end of all *karma* as He is Himself the subject and object of conation and as He alone satisfies the craving of the *mumukṣu*. With his instinct for the Infinite or '*peravā*' as the Āzhvār calls it, the *jīva* pines and pants for reunion with Brahman and since the longing is infinite, the Infinite alone can satisfy it. Just as a man immersed in water or scorched by flames longs for life, the *mumukṣu* longs for *mukti*; he hungers for the Absolute and his hunger is satisfied.

Viśiṣṭādvaita as *avibhāgaism* or mystic unionism expounds the union of Brahman and the *jīva* due to Divine descent of the

Absolute and the spiritual ascent of the finite self. As Brahman is beyond *prakṛti* with its categories of space, time and causality and the *jīva* is obscured by *avidyā*, limited by *karma* and soiled by *kāma*, He is really transcendental as the eternal, self-effulgent and blissful One. But He, as Inner Love, desires the *Brahmanization* of the *jīva* and therefore descends into the finite without losing His Infinity. He enters into the finite as its Inner Self and thus becomes the Immanent or the *antaryāmin*. He is in the finite but is not the finite and he seeks to mould it into His likeness or nature. The process is complete when He incarnates into history, becomes a permanent incarnation in *arca* and is easily accessible even to the lowest species in order that each *jīva* may be transmuted and divinized. The soul-hunger of Vāsudeva for the *mahātmā* that hungers for Him is more intense than the God-hunger of the soul. The soul ascends by the path of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* and soars Godward on the wings of *bhaktirūpāpannajñāna* or '*mathinalam*' or illumined Love. The *ātman* is finite as an entity but its essence is infinite and the two *ātmans* meet at long last and are oned for ever. Like the *Upaniṣadic* birds on the same tree the bird below, namely, *jīva*, is tired of the sweets and bitters of the divided life and soars above and the bird above—the serene and shining Self—seeks the bird below and the two are united. 'Every worldling has thus a divine destiny and destination' as Nammāzhvār says. The *mukta* with his *Brahmadṛṣṭi* sees the same Brahman in all beings and all beings in Brahman and is not satisfied till all *jīvas* shed their separate and separatist feeling and become one with Brahman in *sarvamukti* in the world beyond.

Vis'iṣṭādvaita is thus understood as the view and way of mystic yearning for union with Brahman and its

consummation. The terms ' Vis'iṣṭādvaita ', '*S'ārīraka S'āstra*', ' Pan-organismal Monism ', ' Theistic Monism ' are not so comprehensive as the terms *pūrṇaism* and ' mystic unionism '. This view has affinities with Practical Advaita understood as the disappearance of the dualistic outlook. There is no common ground between Pure Advaita as *vivartavāda* and the degrees of reality and Vaiṣṇavism with its theistic tendency. But there is rapprochement in the views of Practical Advaita or non-dualistic experience as the absence of the dualistic or separatistic outlook and Vis'iṣṭādvaitic unionism. When Brahman is realized, He reveals His own nature, and then all problems are solved or dissolved in direct experience.

For over 500 years, the method of expounding Vedānta as *siddhānta* based on the principle of ' excluded middle ' had led to subtle dialectic and verbal disputations amongst the schools and sects entering into the minutest details of social life. Now, owing to the reign of secularism, religion, especially Vedānta, is threatened with extinction and it is a vital necessity to change the method of *siddhānta* into that of synthesis with a view to discovering points of rapprochement amongst the systems. The three chief Vedāntic systems are not contradictory but are complementary and interrelated though they have their own individuality, and each system has to be judged in the light of historic context. They all agree that the *mumukṣu* seeks *Brahmajñāna* and attains eternal *Brahmānanda* or *mukti*. They all insist on the effacement of *ahaṅkāra* or egoity or egoism as the chief means to realize Brahman or the true *Aham*. While Advaita says that the *jīva as ahaṅkāra* should go, Vis'iṣṭādvaita says that the *ahaṅkāra of jīva* should go. The former affirms that the ' I ' or *aham* is Brahman ; but the latter affirms that the ' I ' denotes itself, but connotes ' I ' as its true Inner Self or

Brahman. Practical Advaita and Pure Vis'iṣṭādvaita are thus almost similar pragmatically. While Vis'iṣṭādvaita says that the *jīva* and Brahman are distinguishable but not divisible, Dvaita insists on their essential distinction as well as difference. Monism or Advaita and theism or Dvaita have their meeting ground in theistic monism or Vis'iṣṭādvaita and are pragmatically one. This method of synthesis stresses the points of agreement among the schools as aspects of Vedānta and omits or ignores the points of difference and the life of S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa illustrates the synthetic view that *nirguṇa* Brahman and *saguṇa* Brahman are one, that *bhakti* and *jñāna*, spirituality and service are also one. By restating the method in this way, which is not opposed to the spirit of *prasthāna-traya*, Vedānta may be presented to the world as the universal philosophy of religion par excellence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SYNTHETIC RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF S'RĪ RĀMAKṚṢṆA

THE truths of religion depend ultimately on the facts of personal experience. It is the concrete life of spiritual genius that gives meaning and validity to the concepts of religion. The best proof of the being of God lies in the being in God. Religion is the science of specialization in God. It is neither a blind dogma nor an empty formula, but a concrete realization of God. The godliness that is unfolded in the life of a saint is the only test of the Absolute of philosophy. The science of religion is an inductive process which eliminates the local and the accidental in the varieties of spiritual experience and thereby establishes its essential truths. It is the negative method of '*neti, neti*', in which the self is discovered by the elimination of the non-self and *ahaṅkāra*. The seeker after God has first to abandon the false values of sense and sensibility before he attains oneness with the Infinite which is the real source as well as the goal of life. The finite, perishing things of life ought to be renounced before the eternal is realized. In this way the finite self is merged in the Divine and becomes His surest evidence.

The life of S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa affords an inspiring example, in modern times, of the manifold ways of mystic experience and the synthetic insight into their common goal. He is in

the line of great seers and mystics like Prahlāda, Nammāzhvār and Caitanya and is a true modern exemplar of Hinduism as a synthetic universal religion. He summed up in his life the strivings of every sect and faith and sought their underlying unity and harmony. To him religion was an organic spiritual craving for God, and his whole being throbbed with the pulse of the spirit. Just as the physical organism has its own wants and appetites, so does the spiritual nature hunger and thirst for God and crave for satisfaction. To the secular-minded man, accustomed to interpret experience in the language of sensibility and reason, the nature and meaning of such mystic experience remains a mystery. We can only explore the outskirts of spiritual struggle and realization and employ human analogies to know what is really beyond our understanding. The experiments in spirituality conducted in the *sādhanā* stage supply a large mass of external evidence and enable us to have some insight into the inner life of spirituality.

Unmindful of hunger, thirst and other organic cravings and unaffected by the environment, he was seized with a mad thirst for God and felt a burning sensation all over the body on account of the agony of separation. He would often sit motionless like a statue, lost in divine meditation, when even breathing was suspended and the normal functions of life were at a standstill. When the bodily functions are thus apparently suspended and inhibited, the soul becomes fully alive and awake to the reality of God. When the spiritual storm rages over the body, the senses swoon away, the mind is tossed and torn and the soul is seized with inexpressible fits of agony and depression alternating with uprushes of exaltation. Self-control was not a case of ascetic self-mortification and suppression with him. It was not the alienation of the senses

that he practised, but alienation from sensuality, it was not fleeing from the world but fleeing from worldliness. Renunciation of earthly values and realization of the Supreme are the negative and positive aspects of the same spiritual process. To abolish the sense of economic and secular values, he resorted to a novel method which has now become classic in mystic literature, by which he would take a clod of earth in one hand and some silver coins in the other, establish an association in his mind regarding their absolute worthlessness in the realization of God, and finally consign both to the Ganges. His body would automatically recoil from contact with money and other sense-values as naturally as it would respond to a divine call. He used to touch sand and filth and thus recognize their equal futility in spiritual consciousness. To abolish the sense of status and superiority, he would often wash unclean places, like a professional scavenger. With a view to eliminating sex-consciousness, he would suggest to himself that he was a woman, and dress and move like a woman. He would regard every man and woman as a living manifestation of the Divine Mother and it is recorded by his disciples that the performance of a Tāntric practice known as *ṣodashi pūja* whereby he one day worshipped his own wife as the Mother, was the crowning consummation of all his *sādhanās*. Though S'āradā Devi was with her husband almost under the same roof in Dakshineswar for eight months, the minds of the divine couple were attuned to the Infinite and never came down to the plane of sensuality.

It will be of absorbing interest to the students of *Bhakti Yoga* to know the external symptoms of his irrepressible yearning for the ecstasy of divine thrills and touches. He developed a mad thirst for the realization of the Motherhood of God. In the agony of his separation from Her, he would

weep profusely like a child and rub his face against the ground. He would moan like a man suffering from an attack of colic and sing songs opening the flood-gate of his heart. Owing to the rush of blood caused by his surging emotions, his chest and face always looked flushed. He felt as if somebody was squeezing his heart like a wet towel and found himself literally guided day and night by another Being. He would, in his divine intoxication, forget himself and mistake the devotee for Divinity. Sometimes he would sit in meditation like a statue and would hear strange rattling sounds in his joints from the ankle upwards as if somebody locked them up one by one so that the body might remain in a fixed posture. One day when he was about to commit suicide in desperation, he saw the Mother face to face. At another period he yearned for a vision of S'rī Rāmā and Sīta and with a view to focussing his infinite devotional energy and attain the right attitude of a *dāsa*, he fancied himself to be Hanumān and began to eat and live like him. He used to jump from place to place, live on roots and fruits alone and pass most of his time on trees. What a man thinks that he becomes, and it is said that S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa had in that mood actually an enlargement of the coccyx by about an inch. He thought that his 'life was one long series of woe, because he saw the eternally suffering Sīta first of all.'

In this way he tried to realize the other *bhāvas* of devotion mentioned by S'rī Caitanya, such as *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura*. The practice of *vaidhi bhakti*, the science of devotion insisting on rigid rituals and *upāsanās*, was gradually followed by *prema bhakti* in which mental effort was superseded by supramental spontaneity and spiritual love. The saint at this stage was seized with a passion for the *mahābhāva*, the synthesis of all the other *bhāvas* of devotion, attained only by

Rādhā and S'rī Caitanya before him, and we may add also by Nammāzhvār. Dressing like a woman, he considered himself a *Gopī* of Bṛndāvan and soon became overpowered by the intoxication of Rādhā-love for S'rī Kṛṣṇa. For six months he was lost in frenzy and spiritual agony. He felt a strange burning sensation all over the body and 'minute drops of blood began to ooze out from the pores of his skin'. At times the joints of his body seemed to be slackened and his senses stopped functioning. Transformed into a Rādhā, he then experienced the nineteen kinds of emotion for God, associated with this *bhāva*. He was at last blessed with the vision of S'rī Kṛṣṇa and immersed in the bliss of His eternal beauty.

The practice of his *Haṭha Yoga* and *Rāja Yoga sādhanās* may now be briefly described. In his practice of *Haṭha Yoga*, one day he felt an irritation in the palate followed by hæmorrhage and in his own words 'the blood was dark like the juice of bean leaves' and a good *sādhu* in the temple explained it as the result of the opening of the *suṣumnā* canal and the rush of blood to the brain being arrested by the bleeding near the palate to prevent *Jaḍa samādhi.*

He practised the sixty-four *tāntric sādhanās* without any idea of sex and animal desires and attained perfection in each. Birds would perch on his head and peck the grains of rice left there during the time of worship. Often snakes would crawl over his motionless body and neither he nor the snakes knew it. In the course of his intense *sādhanā* he felt the upward march of the *kuṇḍalinī s'akti* with a tingling sensation from the feet to the head. He narrates five kinds of motion recognized by scripture, known respectively as the ant-like motion, the frog-like motion, the serpentine motion, the bird-like motion, and lastly, the monkey-like motion, in which the *yogī* feels the *kuṇḍalinī* rising to the brain.

Explaining the same process in terms of the Vedānta he refers to seven planes of consciousness in which the soul progressively realizes cosmic consciousness. The first three levels ending with the navel are confined to normal human consciousness. The fourth, opposite the heart, arouses divine effulgence; in the fifth centre near the throat, the mind functions only in God. When consciousness ascends to the sixth centre, near the junction of the eyebrows, the *yogī* gets the vision of the *Paramātman* and never comes down to the third level. There is a thin veil between this plane and the seventh known as the *sahasrāra* and when it is broken by means of continued *samādhi* for twenty-one days the *jīva* is completely and eternally merged in the *Paramātman*. Though his realization enabled him to exercise the eight *siddhis* mentioned by scripture, he treated them with repugnance and realized their utter worthlessness for devotion.

The biographers next refer to his practice of *Jñāna Yoga* and *advaita*. The saint was already the very embodiment of the four requisites of *advaita*-consciousness known as *sādhana catuṣṭaya*. All these were like the very breath of the nostrils; they were food and drink to him. He was initiated into the order of *saṁnyāsa* and into the glory of *samādhi* by Totāpuri, his Advaita *guru*. The saint sat for three days in meditation, motionless like a rock, though his face was serene and radiant. "For six months at a stretch," he relates, "I remained in that state not at all conscious of day and night. Flies would enter my mouth and nostrils, just as they do in a dead body, but I did not feel them. The hair got matted with accretions of dust."

Then he had an attack of dysentery for six months and came down to bodily consciousness. After his recovery from his chronic illness he got a desire to know Islam and used to

repeat the name of Allah, wear his cloth in the fashion of the Mahomedans and recite the *namaz* regularly, banishing all Hindu ideas from the mind. Then, at another time, there was an onrush of Christian ideas and he offered to Jesus the eager outpourings of his longing heart. All Hindu ideas were swept away before this tidal wave and it is said that after three days of intense practice he had a vision of Jesus.

The spiritual hunger of the modern mind can be appeased not by rigid dogmatism and ritualism, nor even by intellectualism but only by a living realization of God verified by the pragmatic test of intellectual enlightenment and solicitude for the welfare of humanity. He had an unutterable longing to find the Real in every religion and know its spiritual language, and his spiritual adventures and intuitive realizations of God have, therefore, a unique value to the student of comparative religion and mysticism. The integral experience of the Infinite carries with it its own irrefutable certainty and authority. As was said already, the only adequate proof of the existence of God is the experience of God, and S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa with his genius for God attained a transcendental and incommensurable divine consciousness which compels comparison with the divine experience of Nammāzhvār and other ancient seers.

The intense religious practice of S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa was not a *yogic sādhanā* in its conventional sense but a spiritual storm that raged over his whole being and swept away all trace of sensuality and sin. *Yoga* is not only a self-training, but is also a trust in the saving grace of God. It is not a mere psychological or ethical method of self-salvation, but a religious aspiration for the reunion of the self and God by His operative *kṛpā*. *Yoga* in all its aspects involves the three factors of self-renouncement, self-knowledge and the

attainment of the unitive consciousness. The first is the negative method of self-stripping or separating the self or *aham* from its semblance of *ahaṅkāra* functioning mainly through the acquisitive and the sexual instincts represented in Srī Rāmakṛṣṇa's sayings as *kāñcana* and *kāminī*. In the second stage known as introversion, the tumult of the senses is silenced and the self separates itself from its physical semblances and gravitates towards God. The methodic practice of *yoga* is then transfigured into a restless yearning of the *mumukṣu*. The human instincts (*viṣaya kāma*) are sublimated and transformed into the instinct for the infinite (*Bhagavat kāma*). This organic craving for God resulting from self-renunciation and burning love is the supreme condition or consequence of mystic consciousness, though it may be brought about by *Bhakti Yoga* or *Jñāna Yoga*. Though the starting point may be psychologically accounted for, the goal is ultimately the same, namely the realization of God and the communication of godliness to others. Religious faith is thus transformed into the soul-sight of God.

Super-consciousness is attributed by the medical materialist, who regards matter as the cause of the universe, to the psycho-physical disorders of a highly wrought and hysterical temperament and also to auto-suggestion or self-hypnotization. Extremes seem to meet, but they are really poles apart, and God-consciousness is radically different from hysteria and other abnormalities and is easily recognized by its pragmatic expression in the form of spiritual illumination and beneficent service to humanity. The supra-rational is opposed to the irrational, but is the fulfilment of the rational. God-possession is a peculiar disease of the self which cannot be diagnosed by the medical materialist and the psychoanalyst. The malady of love which seized S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa

and Nammāzhvār was caused by God and cured by Him by the gift of immortal life. Spiritual madness can be driven out only by a dose of divine love.

Bhakti Yoga is interested not in the dialectic analysis of the self-contradictions of relational thought, but in the relation between the self and God which deepens into mutual longing and self-loss in the love of the 'other.' *Bhakti* has its own logic; it overcomes the idea that the self and God are mutually exclusive centres existing in their own solid singleness. The Absolute of *jñāna* is the God of *bhakti* and inner Love. The real omnipotence of God consists in His all-compelling love and eternal giving of Himself, and 'the most intense self-effacing love ministers to the intensity of the double fruition.' The *bhakta* does not bargain with God; he seeks God only and not His gifts. Like the Āzhvār and Caitanya, S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa passed through the varieties of Vaiṣṇavite experience. *Bhakti* is a ladder of love in the ascending order of divine intimacy known as *sānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura*, and each stage has its own specific feeling tone or *rasa*. The *madhurabhāva* perfected in the *mahābhāva* is the fulfilment of the other *bhāvas*. It is a spiritual marriage in which the soul is caught up in the flame of love and inwardly embraced. Love develops into *rati* and deepens into *premā* or the intense longing of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa, the beautiful and blissful "Divine Dark" which burnt itself into S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa's heart. The agony of separation had its bodily expression in the suspension of the functioning of the senses and the oozing out of minute drops of blood from the pores of the skin. The Lord of Love likewise longs for His 'other', and their separateness expires in the immortal ecstasy of communion and union.

Jñāna Yoga is a philosophic method of self-analysis and the withdrawal of consciousness from the subject-object

relation to the transcendental state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. This retreat from the surface to the centre is not a process of psychic stilling or lapse into quietism but the self-knowledge of the Absolute. S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa practised the '*neti, neti*' method or *via negationis* by the isolation of pure consciousness from the distractions of sense-impressions and self-feeling, and soon realized the super-conscious state of *samādhi*. Consciousness freed from its relational activities expands into infinity and shines in its own ineffable light. For six months at a stretch he was lost in that state and such self-loss in God was also experienced by the ṛṣis and the Āzhvār. Finally, as stated already, a terrible attack of dysentery dragged him down to the phenomenal plane, and in the interests of humanity he remained on the threshold of super-consciousness during the rest of his earthly life and spent himself in spiritual service and the communication of godliness to humanity like Nammāzhvār before him, who was also ordained by God to spread spirituality to all persons before his attainment of *mukti*. S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa's gentle rebuke to his *guru* who would not bring *advaita jñāna* into line with *bhakti* is of incalculable value in the comparative study of S'aṅkara and Rāmānuja. *Jñāna* and *bhakti* are one; in both, the *ātman* is oned with Brahman.

To him religion was not a dogma of the heresy-hunting type nor a special revelation to a chosen community, but a direct realization of God and the fundamental unity of all the world religions. The rarity of his experience, which has already passed into history, consists in the universality of its religious appeal, and it has set free a rejuvenated form of Hinduism suited to the requirements of modern scientific thought. To him religion was not merely seeking and seeing God, but a divinely-ordained vocation governed by the motive

of elevating the whole of humanity to the level of God. It thus harmonizes the mystic quest for eternal bliss and the needs of historic revelation, the personal and the impersonal aspects, the spirituality of the contemplative and the activism of the altruist. Religions are not contradictory, but complementary, and the theological deductions resulting from the application of formal logic to dogmatic presuppositions are the forerunners of fanaticism and are repugnant to religious hospitality. Personal verification by spiritual induction is indispensable in estimating the value of religious faith, and the effect of psychology on faith is inescapable. Though religion is one, its experiences are varied. The *siddhānta* method of 'either—or' should be supplemented by the synthetic, mystic insight contained in 'both—and'. The spiritual hospitality of modern Hinduism incarnate in seers like Nammāzhvār, Tāyumānavar and S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa is not a pantheistic or eclectic piecing together of bits of faith, but is the recognition of their individuality influenced by the indwelling love of God in all *sāttvic* religions. It is not philosophic synthesis and unity that they achieved by the logical thinking but a religions union and symphony of sects and systems which may be called mystic unionism.

CHAPTER IX

A SYNTHETIC VIEW OF VEDĀNTA

THE object of the Vedānta is the apprehension of Brahman enshrined in *Sāstra* and justified by reasoning and sense-perception and the attainment of infinite bliss. *S'ruti* being the very breath of Brahman is its own evidence; it is eternal and impersonal and is the source of all knowledge. The postulate of Vedāntic thought is the knowability of Brahman by means of intuitive insight afforded by the teaching of the *guru*, individual reflection or *s'ruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava* or direct realization. Divinity can never be realized by mere dialectics or discursive thinking. Reason can only determine truth but cannot discover it; it is an enquiry into the *pramāṇa* and not the intuition of *prameya*. The seeker after truth becomes a seer and it is this test of personal verifiability that invests the study of the Vedānta with a unique value of its own. The intuitions of the Upaniṣads are systematized by the *Sūtras* and summed up by the *Gītā*, and the three together form the Vedānta Prasthānas. The Vedānta reveals the nature of Brahman as the supreme truth, beauty and goodness and, pragmatically speaking, any scripture which aims at the same ideal may be accepted as a species of Vedāntic revelation. This view enables us to restate the method of the Vedānta and emphasize its synthetic rather than the *siddhānta* aspect. The *Sūtra* is an analytic study of

the *S'ruti* and by employing the logical test of consistency and the *Mīmāmsa* rules of Vedic interpretation, it establishes truth by the refutation of rival theories. But its comprehensiveness has given rise to a variety of Vedāntic systems which baffle us by their seeming contradictions. Every system selects a type of *Upaniṣadic* judgments as its central concept and deduces a system therefrom. The synthetic method claims to analyse the rich and varied content of Vedāntic experiences and see them whole without sacrificing their integrity. The criterion of the Vedānta is the *Sūtra*, but the *Gītā* is the crown. It is the synthesis of the logical ground as well as the religious goal. Metaphysics is not really divorced from true mysticism and the map-making mind has also the divine vision of seeing the soul of all things in God. Vedānta is the ideal in which all ideals are realized and it addresses itself to the whole being of man and to integral experience. It aims at logical satisfactoriness as well as spiritual satisfaction. The synthetic study demands an openness of mind which disdains dogma as well as dilettantism, a comprehensiveness of outlook which seeks affinities between truths without impairing their integrity, a passion for the *Sūtra* method of consistency combining with the synoptic vision of the *Gītā* and an insight into the soul of each system as a ray of divine light. The Vedāntic study presupposes (1) a faith in the co-ordination of revelation, reasoning and realization; (2) a lofty view of personality as super-personality satisfying the highest logical, ethical and æsthetic needs; (3) the belief in one God as the ground and goal of human experience, making for rationality, righteousness and rapture; (4) a passion for realizing Brahman by the elimination of a-Brahman; (5) a living faith in the ultimate knowability of God by all: the Knower of all can be known by all; (6) the spirit of benevolence or love of all *jīvas*.

The Vedānta is primarily interested in the knowledge of the self, human as well as Divine, and the discovery of their exact religious relations enshrined in the Vedāntic judgment, " Thou art That." All experience is for a self which is its own evidence, persisting in its being as a self-effulgent subject and essentially free from ignorance, evil and the ills of *samsāra*. The problem of the origin of the universe occupies only the outskirts of the Vedānta and it may well be contended that no theory of creation is either final or satisfying. This truth accounts for the relevancy of the terms, Dvaita, Advaita and Vis'iṣṭādvaita to connote the spiritual relationship between the *jīva* and *Īs'vara* as the central thought of the *S'ruti*. It is the exact meaning given to the above Vedāntic judgment that determines the differentia of each school of thought. Advaita refers to the absolute identity between *jīva* and *Īs'vara*, but Dvaita abhors such identity, and Vis'iṣṭādvaita claims to mediate between the two. It is of profound interest to the student of synthetic Vedānta to examine the details of each school, study the variations and thus bring out their mutual bearings. Each school will be seen to admit generally of seven species of experience including the *avaidika* or alien varieties that are related to them. The Dvaita or theistic relations between God and the soul may be classified into seven kinds: (1) King and subject, (2) Master and servant, (3) Friend and friend, (4) Father and son, (5) Mother and son, (6) Son and mother, and (7) Bridegroom and bride. The Vis'iṣṭādvaitic varieties may be broadly grouped into (1) Vaḍagalaism, (2) Tengalaism, (3) Vallabhaism, (4) S'aiva Siddhānta, (5) Christian mysticism, (6) Sufism and (7) Taoism. The main Advaitic varieties are the Pure Advaita, Pure Practical Advaita and Practical Advaita.[1]

[1] This scheme is developed in my work " Aspects of Advaita ".

Dvaita

The system of Dvaita selects the *bheda s'rutis* as its main texts and posits the personality of God as a Perfect self-conscious Will distinct from the plurality of the finite selves and the aggregate of material things. The self cannot be its own object nor can it have common parts with other selves without sacrificing its individuality. It is an eternal self-conscious monadic personality absolutely dependent on the will of God. The Vedāntic judgment brings out the self-dependence of God, the dependence of the *jīvas* on His will and the differences in the spiritual experience of *mukti* in which all desires are satisfied without the sorrows of satiety. Dvaita generally thrives in the atmosphere of *dāsatva* or divine service. God enters into personal spiritual relations with man and this relationship implies the externality of the relata and their eternal difference manifesting itself in seven forms of devotion.

(1) *God as Lord or Ruler*: The idea of God as *Īs'vara*, Lord or Allā or the Holy connotes His omnipotence and the impotence and unworthiness of the *jīva* and thus generates in the devotee the attitude of reverence and resignation to His will. The name Islam is said to refer to the surrender of man to the will of an extra-cosmic God and resignation to Him. (2) *God as Master or the Dāsya mood*: It is the mood of dependence on God and personal service to Him and arises out of the consciousness of divine power and goodness. (3) *God as Father or Pitā*: This mood combines the reverence that results from the worship of His transcendental eminence and spiritual intimacy between the two due to man being made in the image of God. According to Christianity, fellowship with God is the harmony of the human will with the divine will. Christ

is the divine copula between the finite and the Infinite atoning for the sins of man and revealing the redemptive glory of God. Religion consists in the co-operation of man with God in His increasing purpose. Salvation is at-one-ment with God in His redemptive purpose. In the Zoroastrian scheme, in which the spirit of righteousness is united with the spirit of evil in the one God, the elect soul is to ally itself with the good by absolute piety and purity till in the fulness of time it passes to the other shore and enjoys eternal fellowship with God in the Kingdom of Heaven. (4) *God as Friend*: The *sakhya* state is the consciousness of equality between God and the devotee as seen in the case of Gopāla and the cowherd boys of Bṛndāvan and in the case of Sundaramūrtisvāmigaḷ. (5) *God as Mother or Tāyār or Mātā*: The motherhood of God is a peculiar type of Vedāntic experience associated with S'rī Vaiṣṇavism and S'aivism. It is S'rī or Lakṣmī that changes *Īs'vara* as Law-giver into Redeemer and thus offers security to the *karma*-ridden sinner. In S'aivism and *tantra* worship, the mother idea stands for the energizing of Divine *S'akti* which sustains the soul with love and grace. (6) *God as Child*: The *vātsalyabhāva* brings out the motherly tenderness and care which the devotee exhibits for God as Divine Child and follows directly from the excessive love to His beauteous and tender form exhibited in *avatāra* and *arca* as seen in the love of Yasoda and Periāzhvār and other Āzhvārs. (7) *God as Bridegroom*. In the *Nāystkā-nāyaka bhāva* or *Madhurabhāva* as Caitanya calls it in his scheme of *bhāvas*, the love of the devotee for the Beloved develops into the restless madness of a *mahābhāva* and becomes the fulfilment of all other devotions. Love disdains even *mukti* if it is emptied of Kṛṣṇa-love and rejects the *Īs'varatva* exhibited in the Kṛṣṇa of Mathurā and Dvārakā. The Lord Himself

spurns His transcendentalism and yearns for human love. *Nāyaki* love in S'rī Vaiṣṇavism connotes bridal mysticism and self-effacing love to the *Nāyaka* and is thus regarded as the most adequate expression of *premā.* In the restless love of Rādhā, a storm of spiritual feeling sweeps through the soul and swinging between the agony of separation and the thrills of divine touches, the self-feeling at last vanishes and the two are ultimately glued together in one spirit as Rādhākṛṣṇa. When the infinite feelings stored up in the instincts are spiritualized and directed to God, they lose their sensuality and develop into an irresistible craving for God. But cold or analytic reason dissects love and sees in all these states nothing but hysterical fits and erotic excesses. These experiences are not anthropomorphic as they elevate the *jīva* to the highest spiritual level.

ADVAITA

To the monistic mind duality is only a delusion based an *avidyā.* Personality, human as well as Divine, is a mere perishing phenomenal process limited by time, space and causality, and in the absolute state of *samādhi*, the self expands into the infinity of *sat*, disappears in the spaceless *cidākāsa* and is immersed in eternal bliss. Empirical life is the experience of a self-conscious subject and when the self ceases to be the subject, it returns to its own state of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. The Advaitic interpretation of S'aṅkara is based on this experience and the four truths deduced therefrom, *viz.*, (1) *Vivarthavāda*, (2) Nirguṇa Brahman, (3) *jahat-ajahat lakṣaṇā* and (4) *jīvanmukti*. Knowledge is a cognition and not an affirmation and is obtained by the *abhedas'rutis* known as *mahāvākyas* or Advaitic judgments.

Consciousness is self-posited, eternal and absolute, and every predication thereof is a determination and bare negation and is sublated. Identity precedes difference and then denies it. The copula in the Vedānta judgment "Thou art That" refers to the absolute identity of the *jīva* and *Īs'vara* by the elimination of difference. With the dawn of this Advaitic consciousness, individuality which is a mass of solidified *avidyā* and *māyā* now disappears like an iceberg in the morning sun and expands into the infinity of light and love, released from all *dvandvas* and duality. The more thoroughgoing Advaitin rejects the religious or practical aspect of Advaita and deduces his Pure Advaita by means of dialectic enquiry into the nature of the self. The world process is now explained as the effectuation of *māyā* and *māyā*-bound *Īs'vara* or more consistently still the actualisation of *avidyā* or subjective illusion. *Māyā* is the cause of the cosmic fiction and is an all-enveloping darkness. But since what has a beginning or end cannot be real, *māyā* is really non-existent like the horn of a hare. The extreme form of logical Advaita is exhibited in *ekajīvavāda* and *dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi vāda* and *dṛk-dṛsya viveka*. The Knower cannot become the known and it is the absolute 'I' without the psychic shows. The subject alone is and it is beyond the subject-object relation; it is the 'That' without the 'what'. In this state or *samādhi*, consciousness returns to itself and is self-identical without any reflection or limitation.

The Practical Advaita of S'ankara in its ethico-religious aspect is progressive self-realization of the *Ātman* through *karma* and *jñāna*. It disputes the validity of securing *mokṣa* by mere self-analysis. It is by the spiritual process of purification and meditation that the intuition of Brahman dawns on the mind, followed by the disappearance of *avidyā*. The *bedhābheda* view is the development

of the logical principle of identity in difference and thus postulates the co-existence of apparently contradictory qualities. The Vedāntic judgment from this point of view affirms the unity as well as the difference of spiritual experience. To Bhāskara, however, identity is essential and difference is only an adventitious limitation of empirical experience. In the unity of Brahman or *ekībhāva*, the finite transcends itself and its content coalesces with that of Brahman like 'a perfume exhaled in the very dissolution of its being.' But Yādava rejects the doctrine of *upādhis* and asserts the equal and eternal reality of both identity and difference. *Anubhavādvaita* lays stress on the *pariṇāmavāda* and *kramamukti* or progressive realization of Brahman in the expanding experience of the *brahmavara*, *brahmavarīyan* and *brahmavariṣṭan*. The last stage in the process of Advaita is said to be *turiyātīta*.

VIS'IṢṬĀDVAITA

It is a form of super-Personalism mid-way between theism and absolutism in which the *jīva* is neither a separate real external to God nor a differentiation transcending itself in the Absolute nor a vanishing process. It is a mode or *prakāra* of God organically united with Him who is its source as well as its sustenance. Rāmānuja insists on the reality of experience in all its levels and the equal validity of all Vedic texts. Reality is an affirmation and not a mere cognition. From this spiritual postulate he deduces the principles of *sāmānādhikaraṇya*, *apṛathaksiddhavis'eṣaṇa*, *s'arīra-s'arīrī sambandha* and *kramamukti*. The Vedāntic judgment expounds Brahman as the 'unity of composition' in co-ordination with the same Brahman as the inner self of individuality. Every determining attribute refers to the

subject of which it is the attribute and is distinct from it. Likewise, a word connoting the body also connotes the self of which it is the body. The Vedāntic judgment thus speaks of *jīva* as the *s'arīra* of Brahman. The *jīva* is sustained and controlled by God and becomes a means to His satisfaction. Brahman is the Life of its life, its inner Light and Love. He is the inner ruler of individuality and impelled by the redemptive impulse as Lord and S'rī, He interests Himself in the making of souls. Though the *jīva* is monadic in substance, its attributive thought expands into infinity. Freed from the shackles of *karma*, its *ahaṅkāra* is abandoned and it becomes the *aham* as the mode of God. It becomes *Brahmanized* in intelligence and bliss, but without the cosmic will of Brahman. Owing to its atomic finitude, the self is absolutely dependent on the will of God who, as the *s'eṣī*, is really the means as well as the end. The mystic experience of Nammāzhvār forms the background of this *siddhānta*. Seized with soul-hunger, the Lord of love assaults the *jīva* and tries to swallow up its whole being. The self likewise thirsts for God and is thrilled by His touches. The grace of God is answered by the gift of self. The creative deliciousness of this communion is enhanced by the alternation of the joy of union with the gloom of separation. In the mystic union that follows, individuality swoons away and expires in eternal enjoyment and service. The individual remains but his individuality is lost.

In the synthetic interpretation of this spiritual experience of the Ṛṣis and the Āzhvārs, in what is styled as Ubhaya-vedānta there arose two schools of thought called Vaḍagalaism and Teṅgalaism. Vedānta Des'ika, the founder of the former school, explains the experience of the Āzhvārs in the light of

the teachings of the Ṛṣis and though he recognizes *prapatti* as an alternative to *bhakti*, he emphasizes the ethical side of devotion wherein moral freedom and self-gift have their fruition in the gift of the redemptive grace of God. Mercy is merited by self-gift, though God alone is the means and the end. Teṅgalaism founded by Piḷḷailokācārya lays more stress on the Tamil Veda and the operative grace of God in which the Lord of Love fulfils Himself by seeking the sinner and forgiving his sins. Self-donation follows from the inflow of His redemptive grace. The school of Caitanya known as Acintya Bhedābheda has affinities with Vis'iṣṭādvaita in its aspect of mystic union. In the unitive experience of *madhura-bhāva*, the separateness of the soul is swallowed up in the bliss of communion but not destroyed. The Vallabha system styled as S'uddhādvaita relates to the non-dualistic experience of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa whose beauteous form is made of love itself. S'rī Kṛṣṇa as *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* delights Himself by assuming a formless form. The highest form of devotion called *puṣṭi-bhakti* is not a mere discipline but a deluge of divine love in which the soul is immersed without self-extinction.

S'aiva Siddhānta is the systematization of the *S'rutis*, the *S'aivāgamas* and the experiences of the S'aiva Nāyanmārs and other saints and resembles in a way in its philosophic aspect as brought out by Nīlakaṇṭa, the non-dualistic commentator of the *Sūtras*, the essentials of Vis'iṣṭādvaita system in many respects. It posits the three eternal categories of *Pati*, *pas'u* and *pās'am* which can be distinguished but not divided. *Pati* is the Supreme Lord S'iva who is the essence of life, light and love, the formless absolute, who out of mercy assumes eight cosmic forms without incarnational descent. Like a crystal or mirror, the *pas'u* or *jīva* assumes the form of what is presented to it. It may be a mode of matter

or a mode of S'iva. Salvation is secured by the *jīva* becoming one with S'iva after giving up its false identity with matter and its 36 modes. In the transition from *svānubhava* to *S'ivānubhava*, the self is not absorbed in the Absolute. Its *advaita* relation connotes dependence and inseparability (*ananyatva*). Absorption is thus not loss of personality but loss in the personality of S'iva. Separateness alone is destroyed but not substantiality. S'āktaism as a Vedāntic variety is a religion of love in which S'akti as Mother lavishes Her love on the devotee and grants him *niryāṇa mukti*, higher than the state of *sāyujya* itself.

Christian mysticism is, pragmatically speaking, closely allied to Vis'iṣṭādvaitic experience and is supported by its own scriptural authority. The soul with its genius for God in whom it lives, moves and has its being, yearns for the rapture of reunion. In the game of love, there is as usual a swinging between gloom and joy till the fulness of final rapture is attained. In that state of self-loss, there is the dower of divine vitality in which the grace of God responds to self-donation in the 'osmosis between the self and God.' Sufism also asserts the truth of God as love and indicates the means of experiencing that love and satisfying the thirst for eternal joy. Man is the meeting point of the Absolute and the phenomenal show and he alone can imitate God in His wholeness. When the Lord of Love is reached, 'I' and 'thou' get dissolved in the ocean of divine bliss like breaking bubbles without the destruction of the self.

This rapid survey of the Vedāntic varieties and the religions allied to them in spirit enables us to study their mutual relations in the light of their own religious insight. Every school claims insight into the Inner Self and bases that claim on logical consistency and spiritual

satisfactoriness. While the Ṛṣi seeks the direct intuition of God, the mere philosopher in his passion for logic misses the spiritual meaning of his central concept. The logic of ' one religion ' based on non-contradiction and *siddhānta* is valid so far as it goes, but it assumes the finality of its scriptural authority in a dogmatic way. Institutionalism feeds on the impulse of uniformity and standardization and very often allies itself with secularism and force. The method of immanent criticism adopted in this study is rooted in the assumption of the indwelling of Brahman in all Vedāntic experiences, and in all humility tries to find out the heart of religions without destroying their individuality. It utilizes in the synthetic way to the fullest extent the value of other methods like history, psychology and evolution.

Historically speaking, each school is a response to the vital needs of the age which gave birth to it and is its highest fulfilment. Psychology studies the mentality of each school and explains it by reference to temperament, environment and education. It recognizes the equal values of the three functions of thought, feeling and will, and attributes the differences in the three Vedāntic schools to their emphasis of one aspect of the Divine life. Likewise, the four means of *mukti*, *viz*., *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *rāja yoga* and *jñāna yoga*, are founded on the functions of will, feeling and thought. The service rendered by the pragmatic method to synthetic study is invaluable. Religion aims at intellectual illumination, moral elevation and emotional exaltation, and any religion which satisfies this *sātvika* test may therefore be accepted as practically true. The method of mysticism claims the supreme authoritativeness of personal experience. Every form of mysticism speaks with one voice about the knowability of God and the attainment of the immortal bliss of union. The

evolutionary method is applied to the growth of religious experience as a progressive realization of Brahman. From this point of view truth is not a progress from falsity; it is a progress from the lower to the higher. Advaita, for example, employs this test and claims to reconcile all systems. Religion is said to start with dualistic externality and differentiation and end with unity and identity. But the assimilation of experience on this Advaitic basis or bias is not acceptable to the non-Advaitin. If theism is a concession to common sense, it may be said that Advaita starves the mystic needs of personality. It is therefore safer to follow the traditional view that each system has its own individuality sanctified by immemorial custom.

The content of spiritual experience is determined by the nature of the aspirant's devotion or meditation. The riches of spiritual life cannot be exhausted by mere labels and symbols. While discussing the nature of the 32 *vidyās* mentioned in the *S'ruti*, the *Sūtrakāra* concludes in favour of individual choice on account of the identity of the results, *viz.*, the knowledge of the Brahman and the consequent release from *saṁsāric* evil and ignorance. The *Ṛgveda* asserts this truth in the well-known saying "That which exists is one, the sages call it variously," and is confirmed by the *Gitā* "Whosoever worships me in whatsoever form finally reaches me." The variety of the experiences of Nammāzhvār and Rāmakṛṣṇa points to the manifold ways in which the Lord manifests Himself in the various moods of the devotee. Practically speaking, the difference between Vis'iṣṭādvaitic and Advaitic experience is the distinction between union and identity. To the *mumukṣu* it is almost immaterial to know whether there is self-forgetfulness or self-negation in the non-dualistic experience. Applying the method of Rāmānuja, we may say that an

attribute connotes its substance and conclude that every Vedāntic experience refers to a specific character of Brahman, and therefore to Brahman Himself. God is the goal of all spiritual endeavour, and employing the analogy of the circle and the radii, we may say that God is the centre in whom each of the 21 experiences sketched above ultimately meet. The gift of self to God who is its seed and source is the birthright of every man and religion ought to provide for a dualist to whom monism is based on *māyā* and an Advaitin who sees delusion and death in duality. In Divine democracy, there is certainly a place for Janaka, Prahlāda, Vāmadeva and Jaḍabharata and for the founders of all historic faiths. Vedānṭa also recognizes and realizes the inherent quality of every religious experience to guarantee God and has therefore a justifiable claim to universality. A mystic having his faith in S'rī Kṛṣṇa as *pūrṇāvatāra*, immanent in all sects as their source and goal, loves to think of the *ātman*-hood of all living beings and the fraternity of faiths. Sects may multiply but the God of sects is the same, and may Vedānta unify all religions and thus glorify the land of its birth as of yore.

CHAPTER X

THE UNIVERSALISM OF THE VEDĀNTA[1]

WE live in a time of ferment and of a Titanic struggle carried on in every plane of human activity and everywhere there are unrest, agitation, clash and conflict. Competitive industrialism has invaded every aspect of life and annihilated, for good or evil, distance, isolation and simplicity, has widened the gulf between capital and labour and has resulted in the unequal development of property and the consequent displacement of social harmony. In politics, group egoism has created sharp conflicts arising from race, colour and religion. Darwinism has found its logical culmination in the deification of the super-man, who, despizing the slave-morality of religion, enthrones himself, like a veritable Hiraṇya, as the lord of the universe. The war has revealed the bankruptcy of a civilization which asserts itself by individualistic and nationalistic competition, and works by exclusion and by the elimination of the weak. The ideas of humanism, rationalism, scientific meliorism, socialism and communism are different forms of an intellectual movement tending to undermine the foundations of religion. In philosophy, realism, idealism, absolutism and pragmatism are fighting their eternal fight, as if mere intellect can solve the riddles of life. In

[1] A lecture delivered in Cuddapah in 1919 on the birthday celebration of S'ri Rāmakṛṣṇa, revised and enlarged.

religion there is a sharp clash between rationalism and theology, between theism and absolutism. Democracy even if allied to religion ends in despotism. Every theory tries to dominate other theories and establish its superiority on the ground of efficiency and equal opportunity. Never in the history of the world has there been so much universal agitation and tormenting hatred. However, it is a privilege to live in such stormy times of ceaseless strife and to reflect on the various currents and cross currents along which humanity is drifting. What lends absorbing interest to the enquiry is the question, do these make for chaos and deluge, or, for cosmos and harmony ? Do the 'fairy tales of science' reveal an increasing purpose behind all this stress and struggle ? Or is life 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'? Is the world 'a dog's curly tail', incapable of being straightened, or the expression of a divine purpose ?

The solution lies in an optimistic hope that discord is the best indication of harmony. Increasing differentiation is itself a sure criterion of increasing unity. The depth of hell is a measure of the height of heaven. The heart of humanity, weary of wars and worries, longs for lasting harmony and repose and for a new synthesis which will reveal the true perspective of life and assign to each element its proper place and function. The higher thought of the West is now directed to the grasp of underlying and unifying principles. Modern history cares more for the motives of men than for the life of the leaders. Socialism is based on central truths. The interest in morality is not the interest in man, but in the principles that dominate his life. Higher criticism in theology recognizes the importance of the essential truths of spiritual life. The soul of nationalism is to expand into the soul of humanity. The increasing popularity of international

and cosmopolitan movements is a sure indication of the utter failure of cut-throat competition and of the need for harmony and synthesis based on co-operation, fraternity and altruism. The pendulum is thus swinging from the concrete to the general, from egoism to altruism, from matter to spirit.

India has always stood for a spiritual synthesis of life, of renunciation and love. Time and again she has proclaimed from her Himalayan heights the expansive and harmonizing power of spiritual life. Some pessimists, terrified by the multitudinous differences that persist in India, despair of a living, lasting harmony. To add to the chaos, Western contact, they contend, has introduced a new militant culture which is highly fascinating on account of its siren voice and seductive sweetness. But complexity and heterogeneity are the essential conditions of a larger unity, India is the spiritual meeting place of humanity and warring ideals can be reconciled only in this sacred land of spirituality.

There is a privileged school of thought in India that religion should be divorced from social and political life on the ground that it encourages mysticism and quietism and has outlived its influence. God-consciousness is denounced as apathetic inertia which kills secular activity. The failure of Western secularism reveals the futility of this theory. But it is not true religion, but the theological truth of either—or that divides men and destroys their humanity. But true religion arouses the infinite soul-power that is asleep in individuality. The vitality of a nation depends on its capacity to draw out its spiritual power. India was at its best at the time of its greatest sages. The birth of a sage is a high watermark in the tide of civilization and is a cosmic event. The world thrills with joy at his birth. Says Swami Vivekananda: "The sage goes to a cave and thinks five

thoughts and these pass through mountains and cross oceans. Even Christs and Buddhas are second-rate men." "The strongest minds are often those of whom the noisy world hears least." Poets, orators, artists and statesmen catch a glimpse of the sage's vision and shape the world. When the energy that is conserved in spiritual consciousness becomes dynamic, there well forth a warmth of life and a wealth of thought which inspire, elevate and transfigure the world.

Foremost among the spiritual and unifying forces of modern life stands Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahamsa, a living embodiment of harmony and peace. He summed up in his life the best ideals of the age and perfected them by a practical realization of truth. His life is the best reflection and criticism of modern life from the stand-point of spiritual synthesis. His is a message of love to a warring world. Some regard him as the apostle of social reform; others find in his life an incarnation of philanthropy. But he is a typical Indian seer who placed God-realization before everything else. His was the yearning of the Indian sage, "What is that by knowing which everything else is known?" The answer came to him at last in the soul-sight of the Supreme. The chief value of his realization for us is the synthetic insight that it affords in the understanding of the unity of religions.

The chief characteristic of Hinduism from the Vedāntic standpoint is its all-comprehensiveness and spiritual hospitality as revealed in the following words of Monier Williams: "Hinduism has something to offer which is suited to all minds. Its very strength lies in its infinite adaptability to the infinite diversity of human characters and human tendencies. It has its high spiritual and

abstract side suited to the metaphysical philosopher; its practical and concrete side suited to the man of affairs; its aesthetic and ceremonial side suited to the man of poetic feeling and imagination; its quiescent and contemplative side suited to the man of peace and lover of seclusion." The same truth is expressed by a Hindu writer: "Hinduism has no founder, no single prophet. It is republican in character. It has no personality at its back whose domination would cripple the faith itself. Attacked at one point it shows itself in another. Attacked at a third point it proves impregnable. It is not all idolatry, all pantheism, all theism, all philosophy. It accepts all and rejects nothing from the fetish to the fathomless" as Brahman is in all things and thinkers.

While toleration is thus extolled as the unique strength of Hinduism, it is condemned by some as its special weakness A proselytizing faith seeks the aid of formal logic in establishing the absoluteness of revealed truth and deducing its compelling and coercive power from that assumption. Theological truth with its passion for absolute truth can never justify a compromise with falsehood; but these critics, however, mistake the omnipenetrativeness of spiritual life for the soulless rigidity of formal consistency. Truth is one, but the idea of truth and its working cannot be uniform. Though the Hindu is all-tolerant, he recognizes the individuality of the different systems of philosophy. The orthodox method in Hinduism is often the establishment of one system based on the refutation of other systems. As Max Müller observes, each system in India has an individuality which clearly marks it off from other systems. Different systems seem to have existed from the very beginning and each teacher is a recognized expositor of a respectable tradition.

Vedānta is the only living *Upaniṣadic* system that commands respect and allegiance as an immemorial tradition and it has assimilated the relevant truths of other systems synthetically. It accepts the epistemological method of *Nyāya*, the *Mīmāmsaka* rules of Vedic interpretation, the *Sāṅkhyan* analysis of the self and the world-process and *yogic* spiritual discipline, but rejects the conclusions reached by these systems. Rāmānuja denies the existence of an Absolute that is devoid of differentiation and defines Brahman as the All-Self or *s'arīrī.* The *jīva* ensouls matter and God ensouls the *jīva.* According to the *vivarthavāda* of S'aṅkara, duality and differentiation are fictitious figments of the imagination arising from ignorance. The Advaita *sādhana* is the self-revelation of truth by the removal or rejection of the veiling forces. *Jñāna* is the realization of the self by a process of elimination that it is not the five *kos'as* or sheaths, the three bodies, the three states or the three *guṇas,* and by a positive affirmation of the identity of the *jīva* and *Īs'vara* in *turīya* consciousness. But to Rāmānuja *jñāna* is the realization of the individual self leading to *bhakti* and *prapatti,* which promote the attitude of absolute submission to the will of God and the thirst for His communion. While S'aṅkara says that metaphysical knowledge is attainable even in this life, Rāmānuja establishes the ethico-religious view that realization is a progressive ascent to God, culminating in the attainment of Vaikuṇṭha. Pūrṇaprajña is more pronounced in his monotheistic exposition of the Vedānta. Theism is the assured faith in the personal God having personal relations with the self with a view to redeeming it from its career of sin. The theism of Madhva is distinctly pluralistic as it posits eternal difference between God, man and nature. God is distinct from the *jīvas*

and *prakṛti*; the *jīvas* are distinct from one another and they are distinct from matter. The *jīvas* are classified in a certain moral order and some *jīvas* seek the way of eternal damnation at least in a particular cycle. If evil is to be punished, the evil-minded person must also be punished, and he should be sent to hell. Even in salvation there is a gradation of released souls with eternal difference in their divine enjoyment. S'aiva Siddhānta is not very different from the Vis'iṣṭādvaita of the Vaiṣṇavites as it substitutes S'iva for Viṣṇu and, like other systems, traces its origin to the Vedas. S'āktaism is the philosophy of being-becoming in which the alogical becomes the logical. S'akti in its best form is energizing love and, in the unmanifest condition, it is pure being or S'iva. When the Infinite finitizes itself it is called the *s'akti* aspect. The doctrine of S'iva-S'akti bridges the gulf between being and becoming. Among the heterodox systems of philosophy in India, Buddhism occupies the foremost place. Sorrow is, according to it, due to the aching thirst for life. The annihilation of the craving is brought about by the knowledge that the 'I' is not a permanent entity like the *ātman* of the Vedāntins, but only a stream of consciousness without an abiding and positive content. This knowledge leads to *nirvāṇa*, a state of stirless rest intuited as full emptiness.

Western scholars are equally divided in their interpretation of Indian schools of thought. While Deussen is an enthusiastic advocate of Advaitism when he says that *Tattvam asi* is the triumph of philosophic thought, Max Müller thinks that Rāmānuja's interpretation of the *Sūtra* is a more faithful account than S'aṅkara's. Thibaut is also inclined to accept Rāmānuja as a faithful exponent of the *Vedānta Sūtras* though he prefers S'aṅkara's view of the *Upaniṣads*. Modern Vedāntins follow the historico-critical method of the West and

conclude that the *Gītā* is theistic, while the *Upaniṣads* are monistic. Monier Williams extols Vaiṣṇavism as the only system in India that is worthy of being called a religion.

One despairs of reconciling the apparent contradictions involved in the principles assumed in the chief systems of thought. The history of their development is a history of their fighting with one another on the ground of their theological integrity and finality. Fanaticism is the most dangerous disease of the soul. Its reasoning is very simple. "Truth is absolute, fixed, necessary and coercive. Hence we must force it on the unbelievers." This is the logic of proselytism and persecution. But the synthetic method seeks points of approach and of affinities and is more valuable than that of *siddhānta* or formal logic. The highest thought of the West seeks the reconstruction of society on a new federal basis, Europe seeks to abandon the doctrine that any nationality has the right to denationalize or extirpate other groups, and to accept the view that all must be united in a larger state on the principle of mutual self-respect. Political philosophy conceives of a federal foundation representing every political interest and revealing its inherent tendency to assimilate and adjust new forces and may serve as a basis for a federal union of the several states of the world. In the same way inter-religious understanding may be fostered on the basis of a federation of faiths. The history of religious toleration reveals various attempts at reconciling differences. The political idea of religious neutrality is, on the whole, one of expediency as it seeks the aid of religion to promote political stability and is least valuable as a philosophical theory of toleration. Akbar, Asoka and Sivaji upheld the doctrine on the ground of conviction and not of political expediency, but the conviction in such cases did not always result from synthetic insight. The

popular view of toleration is colourless and unphilosophic, as it does not discriminate the real differences underlying various sects and systems and estimate their relative views. Advaita has constructed a ladder of religions on the principle of degrees of truth, giving the highest place to monism and establishes it in the following manner: When a man identifies himself with his body, he is a dualist; when he identifies himself with the *jīva*, he is a Viśiṣṭādvaitin. When he realizes the *ātman*, he is the Absolute. Non-Advaitic religions do not relish the view that Advaita is for the philosophic few while the other religions are addressed to the ignorant many.

Another view of harmony may be developed and founded on the experiences of the Paramahamsa and the synthetic vision of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* contains the honey of the different systems of thought and the Paramahamsa drank from it and quenched his thirst for immortality and universality. Religion is the striving of the individual soul for communion with what he regards as the Supreme. It is the attempt to reveal the divinity concealed in the heart of all beings. James, true to his psychological temper, says that intense emotional excitability is the differentia of religion. This view identifies religion with emotion and is psychological and pragmatic. The rationalists argue that religion is not an individual attitude, but a metaphysical system dealing with reality as a rational or logical whole. But panlogism is as defective as a psychological religion. Philosophy is said to be founded on the quicksands of fancy and not on the bedrock of scientific thinking. Western ways of thinking which are monistic or pluralistic fail to reconcile the each-form and the all-form. The pluralist starts with the many, but the many does not fit into the

one in a coherent way. The monist doctrine of the one fail to reach the many and reconcile the claims of pluralism. The ethical religions based on the idea of service to God and man are equally unsatisfactory. The theory of helping God in the fulfilment of His apocalyptic purpose is proved to be historically futile, as its application of the wheat and chaff analogy has increased hatred instead of abolishing it.

Religious inquiry is, therefore, neither a feeling, speculation nor activity, but is a spiritual hunger for God intensified by world-weariness. It is the yearning of the *jīva* which includes and transcends feeling, thought and will. Western religion is now in a mood to recognize the truth of divine immanence and spiritual experimentation. The *Upaniṣadic* method of spiritual quest is the inductive inquiry of the human spirit into the nature of Brahman whether He is matter, mind or spirit. Various ideas are suggested for verification in actual life by means of the Absolute or Brahman. This revelation is not the exaltation of a moment, but the steady flow of divine bliss into finite life and infinitizing it. It is not a mere subjective experience, but a revelation of God which can be universalized. What is true for one is true for all, on account of the omnipenetrativeness and immanence of Divinity. The universality of religious experience can, therefore, be inferred from the possibility of divine experiences by all who follow the immanent method of spirituality. Philosophy is only a rational justification of the religious intuition. The seeker after God becomes the seer of God. Its method is essentially deductive, as it aims at the systematization of knowledge based on intuition and revelation. In India religion and philosophy were never dissociated ; religion inspires philosophy and philosophy justifies religion. An intuition is not a mere impulse or feeling, but a fulfilment of the reasoning

process, and Vedānta is the philosophy of the integral experience of the Absolute.

We shall now attempt a philosophic reconciliation of the conflicting problems of religion in the light of the meditation on Brahman as *satyam*, *jñānam* and *ānandam*. While Dvaita or theism is a rational faith in God as infinite will or *sat*, Advaita affirms the *jñāna* side and Vis'iṣṭādvaita stresses the *ānanda* aspect. S'aṅkara, on the whole, regards Brahman as *cit* and Rāmānuja as *ānandam* and Madhva lays stress on *sat* as the supreme will. Intellect generally demands an impersonal Absolute, whereas emotion requires a personal God for its expression. The passive temperament delights in self-effacement and mystic absorption into the Absolute, while the rationalist postulates the one and realizes it as *cit*. The devotee is sustained by the idea that God is Love and *ānanda*. The theist defines God as *svāmin* and the self as *dāsa* and insists on the ideal of service or *kaiṅkarya*.

The Vedāntin is not interested in the aching problem of cosmology and the origin of error and evil. Reason demands an explanation of the universe but the history of its solution betrays the futility of the intellect to find a satisfactory conclusion. S'aṅkara's theory of the *anirvacanīatva* of *māyā* is an admission of its inexplicable nature. The idea of an external designer creates a gulf between God and the universe and does not bridge it. The *Sāṅkhyan* view omits God in its elaborate cosmic plan. The *Nyāya* theory of eternal differences does not account for the existence of underlying unity. The Biblical idea of creation out of nothing is not acceptable to the scientific and *Sāṅkhyan* mind. The Western ideas of evolution fail to explain how matter and spirit came into existence. The problem of the origin of the world and of *ajñāna* and *karma* is thus a riddle of the Sphynx and logically

inexplicable. Just as a hungry man eats the fruit in the garden and does not count the trees and as a doctor cares more for the practical cure of a disease than for the history of its origin, a seeker after salvation hungers for God, gives up the futile attempt of tracing evil and devotes himself to its eradication. By realizing God everything else is realized; but by knowing all things, God may not be known. The divergent views relating to the nature of God, Brahman, the *sādhanās* and *mukti* may, by the adoption of the *samanvaya* method, be shown to have some affinities in so far as they all converge towards the central theme of Brahman.

The conflict between religion and philosophy will cease only when the God of religion is identified with the Absolute of philosophy. Reality should satisfy the demands of reason and the claims of will and feeling. The God of religion should be the logical, ethical and intuitional highest, freed from the defects of polytheism, anthropomorphism and subjectivism. The *Gītā* view of God satisfies these tests by the truth of the immanence of God in all *devas* and other beings combined with His transcendental eminence. Brahman is and has *satyam*, *jñāman* and *ānandam* and the distinction between existence and essence is not of much practical worth to the seeker after God. Truth is true and workable and if the Gods of the world religions satisfy the test of truth, goodness and beauty, they are pragmatically true. Philosophy which is interested in the search of the Supreme Truth ultimately exalts the God of our heart into the the absolute Truth. Every belief has a right to be understood in its best aspect. The comparison of the best in one's faith with the worst in that of another is the most fertile source of fanaticism.

The methods of realization vary in their starting point, but the goal is almost the same. While S'aṅkara assigns the

highest place to *jñāna*, Rāmānuja extols the supreme value of *bhakti*. S'aṅkara identifies *bhakti* in its highest form or *para bhakti* with *jñāna*, just a Rāmānuja interprets *jñāna* as *parama bhakti*. The reconciliation of the two may be effected from the point of view of that of the *mumukṣu* as contrasted with that of the logician. The differentia of religion is *mumukṣutva*, the restless and irrepressible thirst for God, whether it is developed by reason or feeling. S'aṅkara recognizes its supreme value in his *sādhana catuṣṭaya*. *Mumukṣutva* is the fruition and fulfilment of intellect, feeling and will and it is their cumulative Advaitic effect. This integration of the *sādhanās* proves the need for the subordination of intellect, feeling and will to the supreme condition of thirst for *Brahmajñāna*. The S'rī Vaiṣṇavite view of *bhakti-prapatti* refers to the act and attitude of self-submission to the redemptive will of God and it has universal application to all beings, sub-human, celestial and human. The theory of *prema bhakti* or organic craving for God is common to all schools of Vaiṣṇavism, S'aivism and other mystic religions. Though S'aṅkara and Rāmānuja seem to start from different standpoints, they ultimately insist upon developing the instinct for the Infinite as the absolute qualification for *mukti*. While the one emphasizes the thought aspect or *cit*, the other stresses the aspect of feeling or *ānanda*. This difference in the starting point may be accounted for by a difference in temperament, tradition, environment and other psychological conditions. Religion is the yearning of the soul for union with God. 'It is the life of God in the soul of man.' The soul is not mere intellect or feeling, though it can be described in terms of thought and feeling. It knows no physical or metaphysical distinction. Its essential nature is rooted in experimenting with God and experiencing Him.

The chief value of every method consists in producing a feeling of dissatisfaction with it and it is a case of negation by fulfilment. The ultimate fulfilment of all methods is divinity itself.

Even *Karma Yoga* may directly and independently generate this longing for the eternal life of Brahman. A strong S'āstraic tendency in favour of action is discernible in the frequent allusions that are made to the example of King Janaka, and in the ethical speculations seeking to justify that life. Bhīṣmā's attitude in the *S'ānti Parva* seems to be, on the whole, favourable to the direct value of *niṣkāma karma* and consecrated service. The God of the *Gītā* is eternally interested in world-welfare. The *Gītā* philosophy of action satisfies the contemplative and the active temperament. In its negative *Sāṅkhyan* aspect it is detatchment from *prakṛti* and the *guṇas* born of *prakṛti.* In its positive aspect *karma* must be regarded as the worship of God who is the ultimate subject of all action. *Karma* may be either construed as the activity of *prakṛti* or spiritualized as the worship of the Supreme or *Brahmārpaṇam.* The essential nature of *Karma Yoga* lies in *karma* being emptied of *rājasic* interest and the motive is shifted from the little ego to the cosmic self which ensouls it. Action thus performed is the adoration of God and is an integral method of God-realization.

A new conception of *Karma Yoga* is gaining prestige in India owing perhaps to the grafting of Western humanitarianism on the *Gītā* teaching of *lokasaṅgraha.* Service to humanity is extolled as the central idea of the *Gītā* and this ideal can be promoted only by the rejection of selfish salvationism and quietism in favour of activism and altruistic social service. The new type of *sannyāsin* works for world-welfare by giving up the ancient notion of

self-betterment and *mukti.* The Western view of work is largely influenced by Aristotle's insistence on the concept of man as essentially a social animal, the positivist ideal of the worship of humanity and the gospel of helping God in the establishment of His kingdom on earth. This is precisely the attitude for which Vedānta does not stand ; the Vedāntin insists on God-realization as the primary need of man and is more for spiritualizing humanitarianism than secularizing spiritual ideas. Humanity without human beings is an empty abstraction and the prospect of social progress by the withering of the individual cuts at the very root of the idea of Personality as an end in itself. Buddha rejects the knowledge of Brahman and extols benevolence, but Buddhism has enthroned Buddha as the saviour of men. The war has shaken our optimistic faith in the growth of internationalism and the advent of the millennium. The world is, as Swami Vivekānanda frequently observes, like a dog's curly tail which thwarts every effort to straighten it. The wise men of the West now realize the folly of deifying nationalism and the foundation of society on the law of the jungle. But the brute is more in man himself than in the jungle and, aslong as he is dominated by *rāga* and *dveṣa*, service to others is only a semblance of love and is more harmful than honest individualism. The *Gītā* is addressed to humanity in the person of Arjuna and not to a soulless abstraction called humanity. Its gospel of work is the self-effacement of *ahaṅkāra* and the attunement to the redemptive will of *Īsvara* and not helping God in His fight with evil. Service is the outer or dynamic side of spirituality and spiritual realization may be viewed as the vertical ascent to God and service to others as the horizontal side to attain the same goal. The two go together as the interior and exterior aspects of the same spiritual process and the specialist

in religion gains spirituality and transmits it to others. India needs social activism, but it should be stripped of egoistic individualism and the ideas of *ahaṅkāra* and *mamakāra* and dedicated to the Divine will as self-donation.

The theory of *varṇāsrama* is designed to spiritualize the self and the social order and is applicable only when birth and worth go together. But the present discrepancy between the two is the effect of the confusion of Kali. Owing to the ensouling of each *jīva* by God, all *jīvas* are spiritually equal, though, psychologically viewed, they differ in their psycho-physical dispositions and temperaments. To the Vedāntin, spirituality alone is worthwhile and not the man's station in life and he prefers God-realization to the other aims of life. One who has tasted God can never relish secular work. The Janaka type is a rare possibility and is not practicable for all. The householder is like a man fighting from within the fort, but the *sannyāsin* is like the soldier who rushes out of the fort and exposes himself to the risks of battle.

The bewildering complexity of modern life drives us to the consoling theory that we must somehow, by *karma*, *bhakti* or *jñāna*, or by all, muddle through and drift into divine experience. The irreconcilable theories of *mukti* may be reconciled from a psychological point of view. Both Advaita and Visiṣṭādvaita accept the *Sūtra* ideal of *avibhāga*, though the former extols identity or *svarūpa aikya* and the latter *visiṣṭa aikya* or the unity of *sarīrī* and *sarīra*. The *bhakta* has a genius for God and longs for the bliss of Brahman. He is at last immersed in the 'floods and water spouts' of God. Thought is swallowed up in the ecstasy due to the downpour of divine love. This experience may be absorption or may lead to the unitive consciousness. In the former case the *jīva* is lost in the Absolute, but still retains his individuality like salt

dissolved in water. In the latter case, as a melting iceberg becomes one with the water, the *jīva* becomes one with Brahman. But whether there is self-forgetfulness or self-negation, there is, on the whole, a non-dualistic experience. If Advaita and Vis'iṣṭādvaita ever meet, it is in this spiritual experience and not in the philosophy of *adhyāsa*. The intuitions of Vāmadeva, Prahlāda and Nammāzhvār on which Vis'iṣṭādvaita is mainly founded, relate to the experiences of *avibhāga*. The rapturous outpourings of Tāyumānavar and other S'aivite saints which support the systematization of S'aiva Siddhānta have also an Advaitic tendency. The philosophic distinction between the self-effacement of love and the self-negation of *jñāna* is so subtle that it can be ignored for practical purposes. In the former, the *ahaṅkāra* of *jīva* is annulled ; in the latter *ahaṅkāra* as *jīva* is annulled.

The theistic ideas of Pūrṇaprajña, of Īslam and Christianity may be inspired by the *Gītā* teaching that all kinds of worship ultimately connote the same Lord and result in the effacement of self in the service to God and man. There are many mansions in the city of God and in His infinite Love He reveals Himself to people in different forms suited to their temperament and inclination. It is very difficult to define the exact position of heaven in the religious scheme of the universe. They may be spiritual experiences, objective realities or both. Whether they are identical regions with different names or occupy different levels, they are regions of immortality "which the eye hath not seen and dreams cannot picture." They are a noumenal reality beyond the phenomenal ideas of space, time and causality. If different overbeliefs produce practically the same ethical and spiritual effect, like intellectual illumination, moral elevation and emotional ecstasy, they

should, practically speaking, correspond and not be contradictory. As religion is essentially a matter of realization, mere intellectual speculations with regard to its import based on the formal principle of non-contradiction are at best only assumptions that have to be verified by spiritual experience. The conflicting interpretations of revelational truth attempted by deductive and dogmatic thinking land the student of comparative religion in doubt and scepticism. It is formally true that two contradictory faiths cannot both be true. But this cannot be accepted as the major premise of comparative religion and it requires proof. A greater difficulty lies in the determination of the minor premise "Which faith is true". The founder of a school or faith undoubtedly relies on revelation and his intellectual and moral qualification to interpret authority is unquestionable. The existence of a hoary tradition to support his theory is also beyond the possibility of doubt. But the feeling that God confounds the intellect of the followers of an alien faith is foreign to the religion of love. The subtle distinctions of the respective faiths can only be understood by a sympathetic study of the temperament and traditional attitude of each faith and a synthetic insight into their fundamental truths; matha is often based on mathi.

Bigotry as a feeling is bad enough; but when it is based on mere faith justified by philosophy, it furnishes the logic of the inquisition. The synthetic view is logically denounced as an amalgam of truth and untruth and is sought to be demolished. Synthesis is not the absorption of error and evil, but is the *sātvic* appreciation of the soul of each faith. Monotheism has the merit of abolishing polytheistic anarchy, but when its faith breeds fanatical fervour, it has to be corrected by the idea of the immanence of God in all *sātvic* religions. Toleration does not crush individuality, but is

founded on the principle that increasing differentiation is the best indication of increasing harmony. Sects vary and multiply, but the God of sects is the same. The man who identifies himself with the sect rather than with its God is in the first stages of fanaticism. But one who seeks to discover the same God as immanent in all faiths and philosophies develops into a seer who intuits God in everything and everything in God.

The synoptic thinker who prefers the method of synthesis to that of *siddhānta* utilizes all the methods in so far as they serve his end and ignores their defects. The deductive method insists on the absoluteness of truth and its finality, but the logic of constraint leads to physical compulsion and the persecution of the unbeliever. The psychological method is valuable in tracing truth to the temperament of its follower. The practice of the four *yogas* is, for example, determined by the equipment of the *adhikāri* and his nature. The psychological method is suited to the mentality of the *yogī*, whether it is intellectual, emotional or active. Pragmatism judges truth by its fruits and the best test is not the possession of spiritual wisdom or the sense of immortality but the love of all *jīvas* resulting in selfless service. The historical method is useful in explaining a religion as a response to the spiritual needs of the age in which it was developed. The Vedāntic universalist may pray in the mosque, kneel before the Cross, worship the fire, meditate on S'iva and adore Vāsudeva and he may thus gather the flowers of faith, make a garland of love and offer it to Brahman. The ladder theory assigns a place and a value to each religion as a stepping stone to what is regarded by its exponent as the highest stage or stopping place. Various similes are employed in the harmonization of religions like the gems in a diadem, the notes in an

orchestra, the rungs of a ladder, the honey of the bee and the radii of the circle. While the first and the second analogies fail to bring out the integrity of each religion, the third is not relished by the faiths that are placed on the lower rungs of the ladder. It is the last that recognizes the autonomy of each faith and its equality in the federal scheme. Every religion radiates from God and leads its followers to the divine centre. All sects and systems gravitate towards God and when the centre is reached, there is no more return to the world of *rāga-dveṣa*. The harmony of religions from a philosophical point of view can therefore be derived from the synthetic truths of Vedānta. The nature of God or Brahman is an absolute self-valid truth, though the concept of God as Brahman may vary with faiths and philosophies. Spiritual experimentation is an essential condition of God-realization, whether it is generated by *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *yoga* or *karma*, and every one has an instinct for the Infinite. If religious experiences promote *sātvic* quality and social solidarity, they are all practically alike.

Rāmakṛṣṇa was the embodiment of this ideal in the mystic manner of Nammāzhvār. No man ever thirsted more for a universal God and realized Him in His various aspects and in varying religious moods. His whole being was immersed in the ecstasy of God-consciousness. When the tremendous energy that is in the instincts and intelligence is liberated and directed Godward, there is generated an irrepressible and irresistible longing for God. When the worldly mind is tired of work and worry, of raging passion and tormenting thought, and is depressed by the tragic failure of art, science and philosophy, there is generated a thirst for That which eludes intellectual grasp, plays hide and seek with it, tears and tortures it. Is That in the rolling river, the blowing storm or the roaring cataract or is It in the reposing mountain,

the shining sun and the calm sea ? Is It sporting Itself in the agonies of war, in the deluge of blocd and death or is It presiding over love and peace ? Is it guiding and systematizing the various philosophies giving them individuality ? Is It concealed in the heart, immanent in humanity or transcendent in ethereal and boundless light ? Is It in the service of the poor, the heart of the devotee or in the discerning intellect of the rationalist ? It is in everything and It is in nothing. That is Brahman Himself who removes the veil and reveals His universal form and the process of Nature is for the progress of the Self, with a view to *Brahmanizing* it. India is the most complex of countries. Hinduism is the most complex of religions and the author of the *Gītā* is the most elusive God of Love, the Attractor of all souls. Bewildering complexity is the best and surest proof of harmony and harmony is Love.

The terms 'toleration', 'synthesis' and 'harmony' do not adequately bring out the innate spiritual hospitality of Vedāntic universalism. 'Toleration' implies acceptance, but it may mean acquiescence in error and evil. Philosophic synthesis shows underlying unity, but it may also connote the co-existence of contradictions which may not be absorbed. Eclecticism may mean an amalgam and an arithmetical summation of indifferent units. The word 'harmony' has an aesthetic charm and suggestiveness, but it recognizes each faith as a note in a symphony and not as a self-contained system. The term 'federation' is preferable on account of its emphasis on the integrity of each religion without impairing its interdependence and unity. As the *Gītā* says, Brahman is immanent in all beings and in all faiths. It is this truth that inspires the idea of spiritual hospitality. S'rī Kṛṣṇa summons humanity to share in His universal love, in His immortal words, "Whoso worships me in whatsoever form ultimately reaches me."